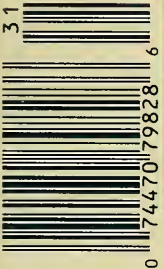


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Table of Contents

QUARTER NOTES

Lawrence Spingarn, <i>Say Uncle</i>	3
Tamara S. Cornelison, <i>Troy Revisited</i>	7

POEMS

Paul Ramsey, "Witnessing the Sea"	9
Joseph Meredith, "Hunter's Moon"	10
"Osprey"	12
Gary Fincke, "The Egypt Street"	14
Barbara Daniels, "The Bear"	22
William Stafford, "For Someone Gone"	23
"Apologia pro Vita Sua"	23
"Opening Scene"	24
Dabney Stuart, "Watermusic"	32
Daniel Burke, FSC, "Teacher's Valediction"	45
Katharine Privett, "Turtle"	46
Judith Werner, "Hubby, Pass the Beer"	59

FICTION

Madelene Carr, <i>October</i>	25
Claude Koch, <i>Myths</i>	33
Maggie Rindfuss, <i>Catching the Light</i>	41

Mary Farr Jordan, *College Visit* 47

ESSAYS

Erhard K. Dortmund, *Huston: First and Last* 15

Michael Jay Katz, *Anecdotal Understandings* 53

BOOK MARKS

Neil Brennan, Review of Martin Standard, *Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years 1939-1966* 60

CONTRIBUTORS 63

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Quarter Notes

LAWRENCE P. SPINGARN

Say Uncle

During the worst years of the Great American Depression, I enjoyed the student life in Pennsylvania and then Maine, where I finished college just under the wire of another cataclysm—World War II. But Pennsylvania and Maine were backwaters; my uncle Leopold in New York City offered me doses of urban sophistication.

A handsome bachelor in his mid-forties, pampered by women and maintained on a trust fund from my grandfather, he contrived a luxurious existence typified by a five-room flat on Riverside Drive, an English walking suit, and a malacca cane. I doubt if he earned \$50 a month as an attorney, or barrister, as he preferred to be called. Thanks to my father's recent death and Leopold's sense of obligation, I was his guest whenever I came to town. Quickly I learned about his habits, including his behavior at the restaurants he frequented.

My journeys from the railroad station were made by gritty subway or crowded bus. Once I entered Leopold's flat, however, I inhaled the odors of *cuir de Russie* and good coffee. I heard the whisper of silk pajamas, met the ghosts of discarded amours. The pull-out bed was comfortable. I could lie till noon beneath rustling quilts, dreaming of triumphs and seductions. But in most respects Leopold was a hard taskmaster who quizzed me on my academic knowledge. He'd read the com-

plete works of Dickens and Thackeray. He could pun in Latin and quote accurately from Dr. Johnson—Dictionary Johnson. Finally, we had to eat; inspecting my rumpled clothes, he shook his narrow white head and phoned for a taxi.

We often dined at Guffanti's, a landmark on West 26th Street frequented by emancipated Jews flouting the dietary laws. On Friday nights the restaurant was jammed. Looking haughtily around, my uncle quaintly intoned his blessing: *Boray pree Guffanti*. Nobody applauded. The dignified port of the Italian waiters did not inhibit Leopold. If the soup was lukewarm, he fussed. If the veal was tough, he berated the chef in person. If the *zabaione* resembled mere custard, he let fly.

"It never helps to keep mum," he observed. "I have standards—don't you know?"

Leopold's standards were often at the mercy of the times. In December, 1933, for example, his quarterly check was three weeks late, so we repaired to Horn and Hardart's for a Christmas feast of lamb stew, apple pie, and coffee. The automated cubicles did not intrigue him. Since there was nobody at hand to domineer, he vented his pique on fellow clients: the black man pouring ketchup into a mug of hot water, the ugly girl opposite us in laddered stockings, the couple trying to placate their child with cold baked beans. Much of the world was starving, but Leopold, nourished by tribal memories of lost grandeur, discoursed on etiquette and small distinctions.



Quarter Notes

"This city's gone to pot," he warned me. "Every day the *hot polloi* take over another block, whole districts. Why, even Fifth Avenue is ruined—utterly! One can't stroll there without encountering losers, panhandlers, tarts..."

"What are tarts?" I asked innocently.

"Rich pastries stuffed with sugar," he said.

Better days came. Leopold's allowance grew. Protected from alien hordes by his cane and grey spats, he introduced me to concerts, museums, the opera. Rumpelmayer's and the Brasserie Slavonique were particular treats. When he took me to his only club, the Grand Street Boys, he ordered intricate dishes in mediocre French and signed the tab with a flourish of his enormous Waterman. The manager saluted him. The attendants cringed at his frown. Beneath portraits of Al Smith, Jimmy Walker, and Judge Leibowitz he must have felt ennobled by association; at least he modified his high tone and curbed his tongue.

"Your grandfather was a charter member," he said. "Yes, before kikes were admitted."

While bigotry was still fashionable, my uncle's bigotry was diluted by much kindness to children, dogs, and the elderly. He was gallant to ladies. He overlooked my foibles, yet in his office he barked at the typist and badgered Dawkins, his clerk. Impatient, opinionated, and rash, he was not at ease with the law. Through the mist of nearly five decades I recall him striding manfully to his various destinations or honing a

keen appetite beside the wind-tossed Hudson. He believed in discipline. He hoped that some golden morning his ship would dock.

"Come," he invited me just before Easter, 1934. "Come to Luchow's. Your parents had their wedding dinner there—in '02 or thereabouts."

The German waiters actually feared Leopold. His military bearing and rigid Teutonic notions filled them with awe. He knew how *hasenpfeffer* should be cooked. He was a stickler for dumplings of the right consistency. He could tell Rhinegau from Domthaler by holding the glass beneath his patrician nose. Speaking correct *hoch Deutsch*, he usually got an honored table in the Black Forest Room.

"I tell you," he declared, "nothing beats a fine wine at dinner. *Pros't!*"

The Gran Ticino below Washington Square offered tasty Piemontese fare. Enthroned by the window one evening, my uncle gazed out at the icy pavement and reminisced about his three terms as an art student.

"Tough!" he began. "Grandpa was very tough. Hated painters and poets. Despised music and the dance. And yet, he paid my fees—until the instructor told him I was hopeless.... Look at the wall yonder. An early effort, a little oil of King Humbert. I copied the mustaches from a sardine tin. The *padrone* gave me free dinners for eight blessed months. *Quid pro quo.*"

"You mean—"

Quarter Notes

"Yes!" he thundered. "Art—damn it! The Wops respect art, the Frogs too. Only here is the painter in rags. Here art is an indulgence, a hobby for rich people."

That summer Leopold met Olga Elcanes, a Junoesque coloratura who'd starred in Donizetti and Mozart. Because of creeping diabetes, she'd abandoned opera for radio and church musicales. With her dyed black hair, sparkling brown eyes, and a hard-won income of \$10,000, she captivated Leopold, who'd been given to showgirls and worse. Olga's flat in the Hotel des Beaux Arts grew redolent from roses. Boxes of Huyler's chocolates melted on her piano. While she practiced, my uncle sat enchanted on the divan. By November they'd announced their engagement; Aunt Augusta was delighted with her younger brother's luck.

"Now Poldi will settle down," she told us nieces and nephews. "Mark my words, she's ideal for him. So refined, so elegant..."

Uncle Charles Felsenberg agreed. So did my cousins in the West 76th Street brownstone—an eccentric flock of cynics and sybarites leaning on old money and defunct reputations. They came to the Hotel des Beaux Arts for further proof. Olga charmed them off their high horses.

"Her parents," Leopold explained, "were stranded here by the Revolution. No, not the Bolshevik Revolution—the previous affair that followed the war with Japan. For three hundred years the Elcanes family were physicians to the

czars. Originally from Castille. One can tell from her eyes. A true aristocrat...."

I knew only the faded beauties who worshipped at the Sephardic temple on Central Park West who had Olga's coloring and style. Much later, when illness had ravaged her voice, Olga sang there in long gloves that hid the needle marks. As fall darkened above their romance, Leopold and Olga experienced a second youth. Traveling to New York for holidays, I was their guest in what Uncle Norbert dubbed "The Tearoom," a place of impeccable napkins but atrocious cooking just off the hotel lobby. The waitresses were flippant and poorly trained. The rolls were cushions of dough. No wine was served. An ogress in an iron cage tabulated each check. And soon, very soon, Leopold fretted beneath the tinkling chandeliers. He yearned for Guffanti's, Moskowitz and Lupowitz, the Bavarian Hofbrau, the Armenian restaurants fighting to survive on Lexington Avenue.

"A dollar fifty for this garbage?" he'd complain. "Overdone. Underdone. Anything but right. I'm going to strike."

"Please!" Olga said at last. "It's typical American food that won't hurt us. I can't digest Russian meals."

She had a stronger will, if not a stronger stomach, than his; they were married on June 10, my eighteenth birthday. Though I couldn't attend the nuptials because of final exams, I did welcome the honeymoon boat returning from Nova Scotia. Leopold was tanned and fit; Olga had lost fourteen pounds. But as summer limped on, I was too



Quarter Notes

busy to note the ups and downs of their marriage. Uncle Charlie gave me a job in his warehouse: \$12 a week for labeling shipments and mopping the floor. A Negro sweated beside me. A Yugoslav was my foreman. Leopold was not happy with my prospects.

"No future there," he said on one occasion. "You look rather seedy. How about dinner Friday?"

His behavior Friday night was a pattern. The chilled vichyssoise offended him. The beef was a disappointment. Dessert, listed on the menu as St. James pudding, moved Leopold to pluck out the raisins that gave it a dubious flavor. He bullied the headwaiter, he insulted the busboys. Upstairs, Olga retired early with migraine; Leopold acted chastened.

"I'm not really tough," he informed me. "Were I tough, I'd refuse to pay for that swill. But I did leave a nice tip—didn't I? Yes, Roxie tried her best."

Roxie had tempting legs, a winning smile. It may have been a procession of Roxies who weakened the bonds, or Leopold's avoidance of the law, or his mounting extravagance. He bought a dozen ties from Sulka's. He escaped to the races at Belmont Park—and never won. He went *en garcon* to certain addresses on the Upper East Side. But when Garfield Minis became Olga's accompanist, Leopold turned jealous. He stayed home to watch the younger man. He ignored Garfield's reedy quaver to concentrate on those delicate fingers. In my presence a scene erupted between Leopold and Olga.

"He's got to go!" Leopold roared. "I can't abide his smirk, his mincing walks. He behaves as if he's indispensable."

Olga lifted her chin and blinked away tears.

"Maybe he is indispensable, Poldi."

With autumn the temperature cooled. I was enrolled at N.Y.U. and gave my weekends to girls, to pleasure. As the years passed, Olga's voice declined to a querulous whisper. She lost more than pounds or dollars. At my final dinner with them as a couple, she apologized for the shoulder of lamb, for the meager portions. The cook had been discharged. The flat, with its clutter of icons, books, tapestries, and ancestral portraits, was actually shabby.

"I don't sing much," Olga admitted.

"Fortunately, my agent convinced Town Hall to give me a benefit performance. For whose benefit I don't know. I'll need a miracle."

The miracle failed to happen. Though the critics were generous, the recital was a disaster, and Olga, going home to rest, was too ill to speak.

"I thought the Brahms *lieder* went quite well," Leopold ventured.

Olga coughed and wiped her mouth.

"Nothing can help, Poldi. The insulin is destroying me. I ought to retire."

The fabric had unravelled. The war had begun in earnest. On June 10, 1942, while at boot camp in North Carolina, I



Quarter Notes

received a letter postmarked Reno, Nevada. It was my 24th birthday.

"I may have been the diva," Olga had written in thin curlicues, "but your uncle was the prima donna."

When the war ended, I drifted to the Coast, married Polly, and became a father. Except for Leopold, my aunts and uncles were dead. Olga had died at her sister's house in Mamaroneck. When I returned to New York in 1958, I phoned Leopold and was told to meet him in Herald Square. Why Herald Square? Why on a desolate public bench? I never found out why. From a few yards off, he looked no older. Close up, however, I marked the hollows and palsied hands. He shambled beside me to Gramercy Park, where Grandpa's house had been. In the spacious dining room of The Players, he mentioned dolefully that Guffanti's had closed. Here too the waiters were ancient; the food was barely palatable. Oddly enough, Leopold didn't pass judgment. He was toying with his napoleon. He refused a cigar.

"I've had my lesson," he said. "One can't go on expecting perfection. Besides, the doctors have been lecturing me. No wine or women, but I can sing all I want. Funny, eh? The joke's on me."

He smiled wanly. The muted light danced on his gold-rimmed pince nez. His clothes were threadbare. His toothless mouth drooped. I couldn't think of the right answer.



TAMARA S. CORNELISON

Troy Revisited

In ancient times it could be reached by sea. Today one takes a bus from Canakkale with children on school tours or summer holidays who sing the latest creation of the latest new rock star from Istanbul and proudly show off their English to bemused tourists. They ask about America, complain about the Greeks who were the ancient enemy and are the enemy still. There is, for them, little interest in Virgil or Homer or Schliemann, much in the enormous replica of the famed wooden horse that stands as if to guard the nine cities that were.

Istanbul, 160 miles away, cannot be felt here. Ankara, even further, is even less a presence. Gallipoli, just across the Dardanelles Strait, is a new battle ground; the monuments to English and French and Turkish dead cannot compete in splendor with that horse.

A square marker on a metal pole identifies Troy I, which was, the guidebook says, destroyed by fire. Pieces of wall still stand, stone upon stone, enduring. A paved ramp and several tall stone gates comprise the ruins of Troy II, burned by some long forgotten enemy.

The next three Troys are difficult. We're told that the destruction may



Quarter Notes

have been the work of Hittites. If so, they were aided and abetted by Heinrich Schliemann, who dismantled walls and towers and whatever else remained and had them shipped back home to Germany. No slouches, those Germans. They took apart the whole of Pergamon this way, labelled each piece, packed, shipped and then unpacked the lot with loving care, and had the whole rebuilt in no time flat—Pergamon resurrected in Berlin. Unfortunately, the guidebooks don't tell where the three missing Troys ended up.

But Schliemann left behind most of Troy VI; the damage here was nature's handiwork—an earthquake.

And next we find the Troy of Priam and his brood, now labelled VIIa. There is a reverent stillness here. Homer lives. Cassandra's prophesy is carried on the wind, and then, just barely heard, the all-unheeded warning of old Laocoon, "beware of Greeks when they bear gifts." Well, we all know that people don't care to be told that their world is coming to an end. Cassandra, for her pains, was called a madwoman. And Laocoon? His end was even messier. Poseidon, who liked the Greeks and didn't want the old priest to ruin their little scheme, sent two fierce serpents from the sea to stop the warnings and the warner before anyone took them seriously.

With eyes closed tight and with imagination freed to soar above the real, one sees. Helen stands on the city battlements. In the three thousand years since Paris brought her here she has not changed. The golden hair still falls

in gleaming waves upon her shoulders. Her eyes, still blue as the Aegean, look out upon the force of Agamemnon. And with him are Odysseus, Achilles, her husband Menelaus. We cannot see the thoughts behind the face that launched those thousand ships. Is she relieved? Worried? Bored?

And just beyond the ruined fragment of the city wall, a chariot races by, dragging poor Hector. Priam weeps, Hecuba weeps. And in the distance, just barely visible, are the vague shadows of Hera and Athena and Aphrodite, whose vanity and bitchy need to be recognized as the prettiest by that foolish wife-snatcher Paris, started the ten year siege that climaxed in the ruin of Troy VIIa.

And after it was all over, Helen went back to Sparta with Menelaus. Odysseus took a wrong turn somewhere and ended up lost at sea for another ten years, giving the lie to Homer's "wily." Some of the conquering heroes stayed behind and built Troy VIIb atop the rubble of Troy VIIa. Then they too were wiped out by fire.

More Greeks came (Troy VIII) and then, not to be outdone, the Romans (Troy IX). They stayed a long time, building columned temples, a theater, a parliament building, even a bath house. When Constantine became emperor, he considered making the place his capital. But, when all was said and done, he decided that an earthquake-prone and malaria infested Troy number X just wouldn't do. He made his name and his own history elsewhere.



Quarter Notes

And so, all the Troys were abandoned and forgotten by everyone except a few nomadic shepherders until the enterprising Schliemann decided to make his fame and fortune by proving that Homer was not just a good storyteller. And then the Turks discovered tourism.

Now the buses roll between Canakkale and Troy on a more or less regular schedule. The visitor is casually advised to take the three o'clock bus back to Canakkale because the five o'clock bus may not come until the following day.

Not far from where Achilles fell there is a little cafe-bar that serves good Turkish tea and muddy Turkish coffee. And just next door, almost an afterthought, one finds a little gift shop with tacky knick-knacks vying for space with exquisite handwoven rugs. The best sellers, of course, are the little statuettes of the wooden horse or, for those who like to travel light, postcards of the same.



PAUL RAMSEY

Witnessing the Sea

Through the rock's eye look at the sea-green sea
Whose waves change continuously.
Ask of the evening, what grain is to be.

JOSEPH MEREDITH

Hunter's Moon

(Jiggs' Field, 1990)

For J. H.

Five paces past the low wall,
around the point of the crumbling barn,
we step into the path of the moon,
like the headlight of onrushing night.
For a gasp quicker than a tail-flick,
it seems a runaway freight, throttle wide,
highballing a cosmic straight.
And we are frozen just for a second,
like prey whose brains must never comprehend
its crushing force.

Then it only hangs on a conjuror's thread,
as though risen from a pit at the world's rim,
And while the field we stalk rolls ever
into obsidian night, the moon floats
up and up, naming blackthorn, fingering ash,
calling trunk and limbs out of blank air.

Forty-two years old and I have never done this—
walk past night fall a remnant field
arrayed in moonlight, all the stubble and mud
and deer prints whited with frozen dew.
The air kicks in my lungs like a thing alive.

Why do we walk here, Heron?
What do we hunt without guns,
hands sweating in pockets,
noses watering from the cold?
Before us looms the black
tree line of Lower State;
behind, your house. The only other light,
it is, from here, a plastic house
on the platform Pop built when I was eight.
The moon lays a silver path back to it,
and the bright windows shiver with six kids
laughing their way snug into winter,
with the two women we love to death.
We are killing them. They are killing us.
Day by day we love them and fail them,
and die a little more either way.

We walk on, the ground hardening underfoot,
spirits hanging on our every breath.

This is the field of Jiggs and Jim,
 silent old men I've seen wave passing
 on the ancient John Deere that belches
 and sheds clods of mud down Pickertown Road.
 They live with their mother who feeds them.
 One day the spell on them will break;
 they will shudder and revert to oxen
 to take their place in some Christmas tableau.
 Or, for all I know, they might
 have returned with Bran from Tir na nOg.
 Should they slip from the tractor
 and touch the earth, they will crumble to dust,
 so long have they stayed in the Land of Women.

It was never supposed to be like this.
 I learned to love too well from Mother.
 She had a generous soul, a heart that broke
 like crystal in the face of beauty or need,
 and out flowed all you could ever want.
 "There, there, Lambekins, it's *all* right."
 Sometimes still her fingers stroke my hair.
 From Pop I learned silence in the face of love.
 "Isn't it enough I do things?"
 "No, you must say it, and say it again."
 But he could not, so he sang instead
 "Beautiful Dreamer" while he peeled potatoes
 and "You're My Everything" stirring slum
 gullion that steamed the panes above the stove.
 He drew hearts on them and wrote LOVE.
 Now he is dead whom it killed to speak,
 and she is dead who was dying to hear.
 They rest someplace darker than that tree line.
 I will carve chess men from their finger bones
 and set each against the other for eternity.
 "Say it." "I can not."
 Check. Checkmate.

Heron, my old friend,
 what do we search for in the dark?
 The world wears us to nubs,
 and the moon is a hole in the sky
 pouring frigid air down our necks.
 I want to follow the silver path back
 to the kids and the women, to the Plasticville
 house on the platform, but you push ahead,
 down a slope where rain has dredged a gully,
 and up a knoll on the other side.
 There you stand, collar up, astride the hill
 like a Druid elder awash in moonlight.

So this is what we have at forty-two:
 nights to prowl a stubbled field,
 days of drudgery and love;
 words that stick in the throat,
 and songs that do not.

In the glare of the moon,
 teeth clicking like bones,
 mud freezing to our boots,
 I know both
 what we hunt, what hunts us.

Osprey

Three times this month
 I've seen the grey sea eagle
 as I crossed, coming or going,
 the Walt Whitman Bridge.
 First, harried by two crows,
 it perched, implacable,
 atop a hundred-foot pole
 at the toxic embarrassment
 that once was Publicker's.
 If the osprey deigned to look
 at them at all, it was,
 in the soar and dive
 of the tipsy crows,
 as a king might regard
 petulant daughters:
 a granite nonchalance
 amid inconsequent nags.
 Then a second time,
 with the morning sun behind it,
 it cut across my line of sight
 south toward Gloucester and,
 like Naber in the clearest pool,
 breasted the air and stroked, one two,
 banking for the far shore.

Then today (good god, today!)
as I reached the highest curve
mid-span, with a vista ten
millennia of Delaware never dreamed—
not even the great-hearted,
bridge-naming, old man-lover ever
imagined the river on fire
like this in its westering bend
toward the airport;
and the air so clear
I could see steam plumes
of far Limerick like the ghost
of Mummer strutting the horizon,
and the vertical grandeur
of downtown aglow in light
no Dutchman ever caught on canvas—
the osprey hung beside me then,
eye level, for a second or two
on the water side of the cables.
And for one thrilling inhalation
we were kindred of the air,
before I breathed again
and started down the bridge,
back to the ground and the western bank,
arriving earth-bound but fortunate
to pay my toll.

GARY FINCKE

The Egypt Street

On Cherrywood Drive, every
Original tree is gone
To age or blight, contractors
Or the lightning which struck six
Of the twelve houses, including ours,
Though nothing burned, not like three
Houses down, the other side,
A son scarred by a bloom of fire.

Two houses down, one son swallowed
His shotgun. Across the street,
One boy opted for his temple,
A small caliber handgun.
And from next door, twenty years
Ago, my classmate was shipped
By plane to a sniper's sightline.

Still, no fathers have been taken
By the illness gestapo.
On this drive, the Hauptmann Ladder
Leans against each house, barking dogs
Sending subtraction through the wire
Of those evenings I've returned,
Waking to my father watching
Me back one Japanese car
After another toward absence.

This time, before I leave, we walk
This street of inequalities
Where the less-than of hex signs
Signal the Life-Flight copter
To soar by these plague-struck homes.
We pass one house where a new room
Is forming, a power saw set
In the key of permanence, and
What we should say lopes ahead
Of us like a dog. And when
We reach the highway where this drive
Begins, we look at the mirror
Tacked to the telephone pole,
Check for cars in the blind spot
Of the nearby curve. And though
We are not crossing, we wait
For a truck's reflection, then
Turn to take one step before
We feel it rush behind us.

An Essay by
ERHARD K. DORTMUND

Huston: First and Last

John Huston's half-century career began and ended with masterpieces. In the history of movies, it's an unmatched achievement.

In 1941, Huston directed his first film, *The Maltese Falcon*. Taken from Dashiell Hammett's 1930 pulp novel, Huston's black and white screen version gleams with the 35-year-old director's appreciation of the world's mendacity. After countless viewings, the movie about the jewel-encrusted black bird—"the stuff that dreams are made of"—remains as fresh and disturbing as your last fierce good kiss.

Forty-six years later, wracked by emphysema and with the end near, Huston filmed the unfilmable: the stern reality of James Joyce's lovely great story, *The Dead*. In a mere eighty-two minutes, Huston's last movie blooms full. With the greatest respect and the most practiced ease, Huston captures Joyce's benediction upon lost love, old age, and inglorious death. *The Dead* is the dying Huston's tender and triumphant farewell.

His triumphant entry, *The Maltese Falcon*, was made in two months, cost less than \$200,000, and in 1941 we'd seen nothing like it. We'd seen nothing like its hero, Sam Spade, the San Francisco shamus who fills the screen with his vulpine presence. Rolling his own from a sack of Bull Durham, his face disturbed by grimaces, Spade had nothing in common with other sleuths of the day—an Ellery Queen, a Bulldog Drummond, a Mr. Moto.

The character of Spade is at the heart of the movie's perennial astonishment; and it's the performance of Humphrey Bogart as Spade that gives *The Maltese Falcon* its sardonic dash. He takes it to a region where the air is thin and chill, where affections have a hard time breathing.

Sam Spade is not a knight-errant; he's not a tough-tender private eye. Underneath the cynical exterior a nice man is definitely not struggling to get out. Spade is a nervy, mercenary gumshoe and an irredeemable son-of-a-bitch. A cheerless womanizer (he's been sleeping with his partner's wife; she's an emotional mess but cushiony); a baiter of cops and gays; something of a sadist, Spade is off-putting yet irresistible.

That's swiftly established in the movie's opening scene. When Brigid O'Shaughnessy, dressed to kill, walks into Spade's office calling herself "Miss Wonderly," Spade watches his new client lie to him. Her eyes are so full of candor and hurt; the mouth is so sad and tremulous—oh, she's a doll she is! Spade can't hide his wintry glee; the shameless Miss Wonderly, wonderfully played by Mary Astor, reaffirms his faith in human treachery. It's a faith which allows Spade the luxury of revulsion toward most everything and everyone.

It can't be said that Spade has friends. True, his efficient secretary, Effie Perrine, who knows her boss and her man, loves him—up to a point, a point Spade is perfectly willing to trade on. And also true, he has acquaintances in the cops and robbers business—detective-sergeant Tom Polhaus; assistant

DA Bryant; his agency's attorney, Sid—but they're not friends. They're people it's handy to keep in touch with, as long as the touch isn't too close.

Even his partner, the luckless Miles Archer (played with breezy sleaze by Jerome Cowan), whose murder sets off the confused, frantic search for the fabulous black bird, Spade finds in life and death a pain to have around. Miles isn't too bright. (Spade once coolly said to him, "You've got brains, yes you have.") An inept lecher, a cuckold, and a mediocre private cop, Archer is a chump. And when he's shot and killed on the job, Spade is, well, irritated. Viewing Archer's sprawled and soiled body, Polhaus turns to Spade and says, "It's tough, him getting it like that. Miles had his faults same as the rest of us, but I guess he must've had some good points, too." Grudgingly, Spade says, "I guess so." Polhaus' gesture finds no hold on Spade's stony indifference.

In any case, Spade already is preoccupied with something else. Of all things, it's a delicate point of honor. Archer may be of no consequence, but his killing is. It forces Spade to act on principle. Even though Archer was a chump, "When a man's partner is killed, he's supposed to do something about it. It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him."

With Archer murdered and Spade having to do something about it, the game is afoot and in the rush of a few days Spade will meet those scoundrels we hold so dear: the tenacious fatman, Mr. Gutman (Sidney Greenstreet); the scented Levantine, Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre); and Elisha Cook, Jr.'s stunted, tough-talking gunsel, Wilmer (as Spade contemptuously observes of Wilmer, "The cheaper the crook, the gaudier the patter").

The roles are acted with verve and skill. By all accounts, Huston allowed his actors great freedom. The result in *The Maltese Falcon* is a set of performances notable for their comic brio and, in the case of Bogart and Astor, their alarming intensity.

In Greenstreet's performance as Gutman, there is gusto, drollery, and a beaming heartlessness, as when, at Spade's urging, he expresses his willingness to sacrifice his faithful bodyguard Wilmer to the police, even though, to be sure, "I feel towards Wilmer just exactly as if he were my own son, I really do...but, well, by Gad!—if you lose a son it's possible to get another—and there's only one Maltese falcon." Spade laughs. He appreciates that in dumping Wilmer, Gutman has betrayed more than his rhetorical son: he's betrayed his actual lover. Once again, the world works the way Spade figures it should: when cornered, you cut your losses—with dressy lamentations, if that's your style.

Best of all, we have Peter Lorre as the homosexual dandy, Joel Cairo. Lorre, the great German stage and screen actor who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s and whose portrayal of a child killer in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) is one of the most memorable of screen performances, does wonders with the role of Cairo. Curly-headed, carrying gloves and cane, and sporting spats and a boutonniere, his Joel Cairo has, like Greenstreet's Gutman, a fondness for florid, educated speech. But unlike Gutman, Cairo, eyes half-closed or popped open, is always flirting with hysteria. He's a dowager's indulged poodle.

In Huston's carefully planned scenes—most of which take place in hotel, apartment and office space—Cairo is often placed in the background. But as he lurks there, Lorre is doing arresting things. At one point, Gutman remarks that facts are required. This absurd statement forces Lorre to half rise from

his armchair; he's sheathed in total bemusement: "The facts?" The phrase is spoken incredulously. There are "facts" and people believe the people who tell them? Lorre's entire body is numb with wonder at anything so preposterous.

Then there is that supreme, restless moment when the unholy gang—Gutman, Wilmer, Cairo, O'Shaughnessy—and its tamer, Spade (full of energy now, excited by the thin ice he's chosen to skate on) wait through a long night at Spade's apartment for his promised delivery of the coveted falcon. A disarmed and depressed Wilmer sleeps on the couch; Gutman is smoking a cigar and reading *Celebrated Criminal Cases of America*; O'Shaughnessy sits uneasily in a chair. Spade prowls, wide awake. In the back of the large living room, Cairo is sprawled asleep in an armchair. All is quiet.

The wait is long. Suddenly, there is a sound at the door. It's Effie with the long-cherished bundle. At that very instant, Cairo lurches sideways to his feet, half stumbles to his left, his face a sleep-walker's blank. For just this flash of time, this dapper hustler is at a loss; he simply has no idea where he is. He's been in some other world. As the most natural response imaginable, it's a great bit of acting intelligence.

The *Maltese Falcon* has a peculiar dramatic tension. It's a comedy about criminals, but it's also a bleak tale of thwarted passions. Huston braids the two perfectly.

Greenstreet and Lorre do the capering. They inflate their roles to give them a larger-than-life comic bounce. In Hammett's novel, Gutman and Cairo, though deftly done, seem a bit forced. We're to take them as exotic international villains. It's all rather "literary." Under Huston's care, these two elegant no-goods are absurd in their fanaticism, in their feverish, perpetual lust for the falcon. Spade finds them more amusing than menacing, and so do we.

In the movie's other drama, nothing funny is going on. Bogart and Astor show us the cold heat of their screwed-up, no-win affair.

Bogart's performance is hard-edged; it crackles with risk-taking. In the film's final scenes, Spade—who has slept with O'Shaughnessy and maybe even loves her—now is enraged at her. Because of her, he's afraid that the police will haul him away as a co-conspirator in three murders. He has to get the truth from her; then he has to doom her with it. Despite his sharkish appetite for her, Spade has to send her over; he won't play the sap for her. "I hope to Christ they don't hang you, precious, by that sweet neck." Bogart—his voice hoarse, his wet and strained face set hard, his lips moist with spittle, his eyes bulged and glittery—brings to the scene a furious relish. It's exhilarating to watch.

There isn't a false step in the way Mary Astor takes on O'Shaughnessy, the sexual power-player and liar extraordinaire. O'Shaughnessy lies incessantly because it's a form of freedom. Lying freely is untrammelled power. You won't find an unrehearsed feeling in her body. She's in pursuit of the falcon and deceit and murder will out.

In the final scene, Astor and Bogart mesh perfectly. Even at this desperate moment, when O'Shaughnessy is being forced to tell the truth and then to walk the plank, Astor lets us see that O'Shaughnessy's stricken responses to Spade's hectoring remain unreadable. Her eyes widen in seeming disbelief;

her nose wrinkles cutely in distaste (is it mock?) at Spade's accusatory vehemence; her voice trembles as she professes her one "truth" amongst all the lies: "In spite of everything I've done, I love you."

Well, who's to say. Certainly not Spade. As the scene concludes, O'Shaughnessy, in the hands of the police, is behind the cage of the elevator door. As she stares through its bars at Spade, the elevator begins its descent—and Spade begins his walk down the staircase. One is tempted to say that both of them are on their way to their allotted circles in Hell. But that's silly, as silly as the title the publicity department at Warner's initially wanted for the film: *The Gent from Frisco*. O'Shaughnessy is just headed for twenty hard years at the women's prison in Tehachapi. As for Spade, he's merely headed back for his office where, as soon as Miles had been murdered, Spade alerted Effie to have the name Archer removed from the agency's "Spade & Archer" sign. Spade figures that you might as well take what you can get. It's a sooty world and nobody's linen is clean.

The Dead is almost too beautiful to talk about. The movie was born in sickness and impending death. Huston's legendary quarrels, his financial ups and downs, the friends won and lost, the debris of a long and often willful life—all that was past. Now, at 80, it was time to cash it in; it was time to make his last movie. Hooking himself to a clutter of oxygen equipment and directing by means of video monitors—he couldn't muster the strength to be on the working set—Huston brought *The Dead* to completion. He had come a long way from Spade's empty apartment and bleak heart to the warm hearth of the Morkan sisters' townhouse in Dublin in the winter of 1904.

James Joyce's soulful Irish tale is a tale of forgiveness and it was one of Huston's long-time favorites. On January 6, 1904, the Feast of the Epiphany, the old Morkan sisters, Julia and Kate, along with their fortyish niece, Mary Jane, are giving their annual Christmas season party. As teachers and performers, the good ladies have been long established in Dublin's musical life. Their party always attracts plenty of old friends, former students, and beloved relatives.

On this festive night, it's snowing in Dublin and the arriving guests—faces stinging from the cold—pull off their heavy coats and woolen scarfs, hand them to Lily the housemaid, and hurry upstairs where they are greeted by a beaming Aunt Kate and a smiling but somewhat addled Aunt Julia. Quickening the air are the sounds of laughing and gossiping, of music and dancing, the smells of holiday food and drink. Arriving a bit late—"My wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself"—are Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. This bustling opening of the movie Huston sketches in brilliantly.

The party, praise be, is a success, and as it draws to a close in the wee hours, Gabriel, Kate and Julia's favorite nephew, rises from the dinner table to give his annual "thank you" speech to his aunts. That eloquence done, the guests begin to leave (outside it's now snowing heavily), some a bit tired, some a bit soused (or as Aunt Kate would say, "screwed"), some a bit out of sorts. Gabriel and his wife Gretta, rather than face a long, cold carriage ride home, put up at a nearby hotel. In their dimly-lit room, Gretta, stirred by a terribly beautiful song sung at party's end, unburdens her heart. She tells her husband of a young lad she once loved. As the snow falls on Dublin, the movie ends. It's all that simple, but the simplicity contains the whole world.

Huston's problem was to do what Joyce had done with genius (and at age 25!): to tell the mortal tale directly, deftly. Huston had to capture the story's surface bustle and warmth, its comic quirkiness, and yet reveal in the clearest of terms its lining of regret, hurt and loss—that was the trick and Huston pulls it off with astonishing skill. *The Dead* is a movie of unforced greatness. It has the fluidity and clarity of a grand song, unhurriedly sung.

From beginning to end, it's clear Huston knows exactly what to do—or rather, he knows exactly what not to do. He won't "direct." He won't work with a heavy, intrusive hand. You can see his happy trust in all the hands aboard ship—the camera staff, the actors, the technicians. He loves watching them go about their business.

Huston is pleased to let his camera linger. It lingers on the Morkans' festive table: the flash of silver, the brown skin of roasted goose, the bowls of fruit and of hot floury potatoes, the decanters and glasses filled with port and dark sherry. It moves among the dancers, the ladies and gentlemen, young and old, who've come to the Morkans' party. The waltzes and quadrilles are sedately danced, but within the pattern of the simple steps Huston wants us to see that splendid things are going on. Dancing is the way men and women can touch each other, can look into each other's eyes, can enjoy the response of a partner's body. The leathery constraints of marriage, station, even age, are softened. Dancing allows us to be flesh and blood again. Dancing, however genteel, is sanity, and as the camera glides among the dancing couples it celebrates these immemorial joys.

All through *The Dead* there is music. It informs the lives of these Dubliners. For Joyce and Huston, *The Dead* is a tribute to the power of music to lift spirits and break hearts. (Joyce had a fine tenor voice and knew a thing or two about music's witchery.) In *The Dead*, the music dissolves time. It fuses past and present. It conveys the real beyond the real—that place where stones bleed and the dead speak.

Huston associates making music with gallantry. At least that's the case with Julia Morkan. At the party, the old woman is pressed to sing, and Huston sees to it that Aunt Julia's song, "Arrayed for the Bridal," is the most gallant music-making moment of all. Huston cherishes Aunt Julia and as Denis Donoghue has written, "He will not have her mocked." The camera looks at her straight on, at her broken face, the cracked voice which Huston will not still. We're made to face up to her age, to her ruin, to the desecration of her talent. And as she sings brokenly and gallantly, Huston takes us into her old woman's bedroom (strewn with the coats of the guests), and in there are the old framed photos of her young parents; in there are the mementos that tell of her days of vitality, of music-making, of Catholic piety. The camera takes it all in and then returns to the dining room and to Julia, whose song is about to end.

The pathos achieved by this scene within a scene is near unbearable. The depth of it we experience only in the rarest of moments in theater and film. The drunken Freddy Malins—each year he arrives at the Morkans' holiday party "comically" stewed—is absolutely right when he totters up to Aunt Julia and proclaims: "I never heard you sing so well, never... That's the truth. Upon

my word of honor, that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so... clear and fresh, never."

Cathleen Delany's Aunt Julia is an incandescent performance. It stuns you. There is that moment in the film when Gabriel Conroy in his fussily eloquent after-dinner speech praises the Morkan sisters and Mary Jane for their yearly hospitality and for their devotion to Dublin's musical education and, my God, there is the face of Aunt Julia, tears streaming. She is *stricken* with joy. How on earth was Delany capable of that? Her performance is one of the least self-conscious, simplest, and greatest ever seen on film. You bet Huston won't have Aunt Julia mocked.

Chubby Aunt Kate is nicely played by Helena Carroll. Her reverie during dinner about the forgotten sweet tenor she once heard many years ago isn't only touching, it prepares us for the film's crucial scene: Gretta Conroy's stairway absorption in the sweetest of songs, "The Lass of Aughrim," sung by Mr. D'Arcy (Frank Patterson). It's late and time for the Conroys to leave and just as Gretta begins to step down the staircase in the back dining room D'Arcy begins softly singing.

What John Huston and his script-writer son, Tony, do with this delicate, pivotal scene is flawless. The tenor's voice floats in the air. Disembodied, it floods the staircase, arrests Gretta's steps, and fills her heart. Leaning on the banister, she's transfixed. Her raptness makes her more beautiful; it awes her husband who has come upon the scene quite by accident. It moves him to desire her, to see his wife, this woman on the stairs, as someone altogether exceptional. It is a scene of feeling upon feeling, all of them called forth by that flowing, brook-clear country song of lost love.

Then the song ends. Gabriel (carefully played by Donal McCann) calls to Gretta. His voice breaks her spell. She comes back to the present. During the entire scene you can not only see and hear its perfection; you can also sense Huston's deep joy in letting it unfold. It must have moved him to tears, as it does us.

With this ecstatic scene, the movie turns its face toward a deeper world. Quite unexpectedly, the Morkans' festive evening has brought Gabriel and Gretta to the cave-mouth of a long-avoided, dark subject: the true nature of their married life together. With a shuddering confession, Gretta enters the dark. As Gabriel listens to his wife's lament, her revelations chasten him and bring him to a different understanding of his wife, of himself, and of all those living who will soon be dead.

It all begins when the Conroys enter their hotel room. (Huston's restraint here, his respect for what he's about to film, is masterful.) Gabriel, struck by Gretta's response to D'Arcy's song and aroused by the illicitness of a hotel room, is full of sexual need and of the hope that this time Gretta is too. Gretta, tired, pre-occupied with what the country song has brought back into her heart, and saddened by her husband's desire, suddenly tells him, at long last, about her dead, youthful lover, Michael Furey. In her girlhood, she confesses, "I was great with him at that time."

What a glorious line, one of the most beautiful in our literature. But now it's also one of the most beautiful in the movies. That simple word "great," as placed in the line and spoken to perfection by Anjelica Huston, thunders with love's fulfillment and the lost glory of it. The fact is that Huston's *The Dead*

isn't only his tribute to old Irish ways, to dark sherry, to song and dance, to the spirited elderly, to the sacrament of the holiday table, it is above all his tribute to literature, to the beauty of the word, and to the beauty of his daughter, Anjelica, who speaks it.

In *The Dead*, Huston loves now, this instant, certain things which very soon he can love no longer. It's this uncluttered urgency which helps explain the movie's Olympian mix of speed and deftness, exuberance and gravity, judgment and forgiveness.

The Dead is a movie of uncommon emotional richness. It's comparable to Eugene O'Neill's mythic family tragedy, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. But whereas O'Neill's drama is garrulous, Huston's film says just enough. Still, both come home to the same shore—silence. The need to say no more. The balm of *that*. This is what Gabriel is made to see in the darkened hotel room. In *Long Day's Journey*, the old, lost, drug-addled Mary Tyrone holds her white wedding dress in her hands; in *The Dead*, a grave Gabriel Conroy holds his wife's revelatory words in his heart. And as they fix upon the tragedy of their lives, we fix upon our own.

On another front, *The Dead* deserves special praise. For the movie, John and Tony Huston fashioned a new character, a Mr. Grace (played handsomely by Sean McClory). This allowed Huston to slip in a recitation of "Broken Vows," a grand and dark Irish poem about love's terrifying power, love as soul-madness. Mr. Grace's practiced rendition stirs Gretta's memory. We sense we've been let in on some deep secret. Later on, no wonder the "Lass of Aughrim" will transfix her.

All through the movie there's much to transfix us. There's Alex North's bare musical score which, like Huston's direction, doesn't fuss about. There are the men and women at the party whom, even though we don't know them well, we discover we understand. This fact has much to do not only with the script, direction, and editing, but with the faces of the actors. It's a magnificent gallery: Anjelica Huston's long, beautifully bony face; Donal McCann's plain face with its hurt eyes and subtle mouth; the handsome head of Dan O'Herlihy, silver-haired, proud, flushed with good whiskey, at the party's end a boozier's defeated face; Marie Keen, who as Freddy Malin's disappointed mother—how she despises and loves her feckless middle-aged son—has the pinched face of a mean-spirited shrewmouse. The entire cast is a joy to behold. It's as simple as that.

A joy to behold, yes, but in fact almost no one has beheld *The Dead*. It's a fate for the movie which Huston probably anticipated. He must have known *The Dead* stood little chance at the box office. Still, he labored on, for like the young Joyce, the old, dying Huston had seen something altogether huge and calming: if truth will out, so too must beauty. It's no wonder, then, that singing throughout *The Dead*'s tragic theme, through every bit of it, is a Mozartian tenderness.

"Michael Furey" belongs to all of us. We have all been great with him; he, too, is the stuff dreams are made of. He's the truest of our many selves, the one the round of the years wears down, leaving us standing, like Gabriel Conroy at the movie's hushed and sublime end, here by the window trying to

make our peace with things as we hear “the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”

During much of his spirited long life, John Huston made a point of living royally. How absolutely right that his first and last movies should be so princely.



BARBARA DANIELS

The Bear

So we are married, as color marries fabric,
as birds marry air. The bear of marriage
won't obey. Yet he rasps us
with his bright tongue, rubs his snout
across our mouths, and climbs up on the couch
to hold us in his wide embrace. Then he
swings loosely down and lies flat before the fire.
Solid on his back, he lifts his feet high,
easing the black claws out of his dense fur.
They shine in the light.

While we talk, the bear turns, yawns,
and falls asleep. Listeners and watchers
for each other, bones of each other's bones,
we lie beside him on the shadowed floor.
I gulp in the heavy smell of bear. I hear
your breathing. So we are married,
as flame marries paper,
as green marries grass.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

For Someone Gone

If I called from a booth, if the phone rang
and rang in your town where you
came on the line, if I looked out
through the glass at the rain where
cars pass with lights low—

If I hung up fast so the rain could stop,
the cars freeze where they are, the glass
hold those drops one at a time
still—if that scene did not change
but caught the dead world forever—

It would be your town, while you lived,
where time went round and round. But I can't
make it come right today, even after all
my trying. I put out my tongue
and lick the glass clean, then tell the night:
"all right—let it rain."

Apologia pro Vita Sua

Why did you go, of an afternoon, there
on the bluff above the river?

*Because it flowed, because it rolled,
so quiet and gray across brown sand.*

But why did you leave the others, the school,
the town huddled in the bend of the river?

*Because of those miles past Yaggy's orchard,
the sandhill country, a sound in the staring sky.*

Why did you come back a dreamer, never to contend
like the others, always a little strange and alone?

*It was those afternoons there in the open,
it was the whole world: I was drunk on the world.*

WILLIAM STAFFORD

Opening Scene

It's just The Earth, a great still body
lengthened under wind and sun stretching
away. Only dirt, only a dream hollowed from
space. Look forth. Try not to love it: let something
greater than this hold your life.

For the shadows do promise, "Farther, deeper, not just
Earth." Colors twist away from each other:
"We didn't have to be here." Volunteers,
the silent clouds parade; they never heard of
competition, or of being worthy, or of duty.

And somewhere under a rock, they say, Time is
whispering its favorite word. All the rocks listen.
"Of course," they say, "we all knew that." The most talkative
rock soon falls silent, the word is so serious
and the place it came from so dark, so shivery.

It's a long story the centuries tell, and they're all much
the same. Oh, I've known a few that were different
enough to remember: a comet came, or a glacier
crept over and stayed for awhile. There was one, though,
too painful to tell. I never talk about it.

And I'm real, I think. But sometimes of a winter day
the mist brings its doubt so deep that no one
can tell what's a mountain and what's beyond anything
Earth ever contained. Such times, I grow ambitious—
what if these real rocks are the shadow?

What if I'm greater than real?

A Story by
MADELENE CARR

October

Mr. Gilbert was seventy-seven years old and he had taught music ever since he was eighteen. At three o'clock he was expecting Virginia Hewitt for a violin lesson. He had told her he had something for her. At noon he went into his room, the front room of the row house in which he had lived all his married life, took a key with an ornate head from the bookcase, and unlocked his music cabinet. He rummaged around until he dug out a sheaf of handwritten music. As he read the notes, humming the melody, his outstretched hands began to shake and he had to sit down to rest his arms. When he got through it, he put it back, locked the cabinet, adjusted some sheets on the piano, and moved the music stand nearer the window.

The room had a faint smell of things preserved apart that was different from the smells of cooking and soap and newspapers that filled the rest of the house. Everything here was old and frail, left from the sparse life he and Viola had lived before his son's family took over. The cabriole legs of the music cabinet, the carved music stand, the cane-backed rocker, and the thin axminster rug, each thing was designed to be admired. He liked his things. The new furniture his son had brought for the rest of the house was coarse by comparison.

Mr. Gilbert took a last look around his room, turned the porcelain door knob, and went into the narrow hall meaning to go straight to the street, but his daughter-in-law Charlotte called him to the kitchen for lunch. The two grown children were already at the table eating soup, and when he stepped carefully down on the linoleum, Dorothy, the girl, got up from her place and arranged for him to sit near the window.

She was bigger than her mother behind and her dark hair grew on her legs above thick white socks. Her legs reminded her grandfather of stout fence posts. When she laughed, the braces on her teeth gleamed.

He looked over the lunch table. Viola had never set out much for lunch, but to Charlotte eating was a moral obligation. He was not hungry but he tried to eat to please them. His grandson moved the salt and pepper, the sugar and the bread around his plate like a barricade. In his awkward way he wanted to show his grandfather some attention. They were proud of him because he was seventy-seven. They told their friends, "You wouldn't believe our grandpop. He kids around like anybody else." He tried not to disappoint them but today he was in no kidding humor.

"Virginia Hewitt is coming for her lesson at three," he said. "I don't want any disturbance while she's here."

Dorothy reached for a cut of butter and spoke without looking at him.

"Oh, Grandpop, I meant to tell you I'm having the club tonight. We'll be back in the rumpus room, just a few kids and some eats."

"They'll have those records going," said Charlotte.

He turned his face with its loose skin and folds of wrinkles from one to the other and coughed into his ragged moustache.

"I don't want any interference with my lesson. Wednesday isn't a good day to plan things like that."

"It's all right, Dad," said Charlotte. "I'll see that it's quiet this afternoon."

"I believe Grandpop has a crush on Virginia Hewitt. How about it, Grandpop?" said Dorothy.

"I wouldn't blame him," said the boy. "She's a looker."

"That's enough nonsense," said Charlotte. "There's one thing you can always say, your grandmother never had to worry about Grandpop chasing the women. Finish your soup, Dad."

Mr. Gilbert shifted in his chair and tried another mouthful. He was tired. They wore him out with boredom. It was hard to keep his spine erect and his face from sagging. Their minds were like a street of company houses, living room, dining room, kitchen in every one, no surprises, no secret nooks in old gardens, no casements open with strange notes drifting into the dim air, no turreted mansions guarding scandals. With Viola it had been the same. Her presence in the house had weighed him down, her everlasting fussing over the housework.

He stood up and asked Charlotte about the insurance payment. He said he was going uptown and he would drop it off if she wanted. Charlotte looked at him in mild surprise and reminded him that Dorothy had taken it up on the tenth as usual. He said it was important to be particular about keeping up the insurance. As he took his plate over to the sink, there was a loose end squirming around in his mind making him uncomfortable. He hated to nag them, but he could not resist turning to the girl before he went out to ask her whether she had given the check to Tom Hughes himself. She said some young fellow took it, and he stomped down the hall muttering to himself. If it had been their house, they would be more concerned and not leave such things to children. He took his hat from the rack in the hall and went out.

Sun and the new emptiness of autumn were in the street. A few bright, translucent leaves clung to the maples, gaudy against the strong blue of the sky. The sky glittered right down to the gables, and the sun lay warm on the bricks of the pavement and on the clapboard house fronts that curved in an arc with the curve of the street. The pavement was rough because some of the bricks were sunken and others pushed up by the frosts of past winters. Seventy-seven. *Your grandmother never had to worry.* The pavement had always been rough like this. It had been a trick to keep a hoop wheeling smoothly on this stretch. He must have been about seven. All the years between, what had eaten up all the years? There were things he had expected, things to which he had looked forward that had never happened at all.

The promise of morning, any morning back there when he was seven, the anticipation of adventures too wonderful and terrible to imagine stretching on ahead as far as he could see. All that was gone now. At seventy-seven you only hoped things would *not* happen. Even as a big boy going to school he was sometimes so full of trepidation that it took all his nerve to force himself in the gate and his hands shook, not with the palsy of age as now, but with the mystery hid in the fearful, wonderful minutes coming up.

A prodigious lot of minutes had moved off and he had had a good life. Everybody spoke of what a nice quiet life he had enjoyed and only he knew, and not with any real pain either, that it had been a nut without a kernel.

He crossed through the graveyard behind the church and the parish school. The school had been closed years ago. Young people around town did not know that it had ever been a school. *What's that funny little building?*

He must have learned many things at school. A boy coming into the world has an awful complex of things to learn that he soon takes for granted, but he could remember a few of the hours he spent there. Most of them were as dead as leaves converted back to soil, no trace of them, but maybe they had left something in his mind. The corner around back where two old tombstones leaned together with their inscriptions worn away always brought that girl to mind. She was a girl a little apart from the other children, daughter of an actor or a foreigner of some sort. It must have been in eighth grade. He could see her now but he could not put a name to her. Stella? Della? His wife was at the school at the same time. A curious circumstance. She was in the same class with him and yet he had no memory of her being there. Where had she sat that last year? He should have asked her. Often questions he wanted to ask her teased him and he felt cheated that she should be inaccessible, a person close to him for so long. Death was the most unreasonable thing in the crazy world. It seemed impossible that he should not be able to find her later in the day and get the answer to just one question.

Walking straight as though a rod were bound to his spine, he turned into the main street. He was in good shape. His step still had some spring in it and he sometimes overheard people remark about how straight he stood. He looked for Tom Hughes' hole-in-the-wall office to make sure Dorothy had got the check in.

Tom's clerk made him wait until he finished typing a form he was working on, and then he came over to the counter all business as if he was dealing with a stranger. When Mr. Gilbert asked him about the check, he was assured that Charlotte always had the payment in on the nose. Mr. Gilbert pulled a frown and asked him to please check his records. A lot he cared if the whole town thought him an old fool.

Out in the street he tipped his hat to one of the teachers from Kimberly Hall. They were back in session then. Of course. Time was all mixed up since he had given up school teaching. The months had lost their meaning in the round of the year.

It was a few years now since he had been on the staff and he missed the girls, but not as much as he had thought he would. It surprised him that he did not miss them more when he remembered how involved he was in the school. Every lesson was a world in itself and every recital a cosmos hanging perilously on strings. Now it was all blown away like the smoke of yesterday's leaf fire leaving only a little soft spot of regret.

He had been a good teacher, a bit lenient perhaps, but no cardboard man like these fellows who came out of Teachers' College today. He taught real music with a real passion. Gilbert is a musician, they said, and they liked him. No nonsense with the girls either. He gathered up his mouth and chuckled to himself. He had had a love affair with every one of them. A dirty old lecher at heart. The words delighted him. A dirty old lecher, but not so

stupid as to spoil it all for himself by pawing over them and getting dismissed like the art man. He smiled to think how much you could get away with if you kept it all sealed up in your head. Year after year he had reveled in the scent of them, caressed the curves of their cheeks with his eyes, thrilled to their quick unfolding talent, and sometimes felt a dry, wordless agony when they went away for the last time in June. He saw them all as women his own age. Strange how the heart adjusted the mind.

"Hello, Mr. Gilbert."

A youngster passed him and was halfway up the block before he could place him as a boy who came to the house with his grandson. The swing and hardness of the boy's walk beat in his head as he turned into Ed Finnigan's drug store for his tobacco. Good shape. Good shape for nearly eighty, but not for eighteen. He had forgotten how he used to walk five miles on a Saturday. All that energy. Where had it gone? There was a hollow, all-gone feeling in his chest when he thought how little he had made of it.

In Finnigan's store he leaned against the counter to pass the time of day. Ed Finnigan was a gloomy old codger who had been talking about how the world was going downhill ever since Mr. Gilbert had known him. He came in mainly for the pleasure of contradicting Ed's predictions, but today the druggist was in a sanguine mood. He even agreed that there might be more nice fall days ahead. Mr. Gilbert picked up his tobacco and left and took his time crossing the street. They could wait for a body even if the light had changed. You'd think those blinking traffic lights were decreed by God, the Father, the way they looked at him. They could wait.

The afternoon was warming up. The sun was not just a comfort between the shoulder blades; it was making the town sultry and the shortness of breath was coming on him. On Broad Street he turned into the graveyard to cut back to the house, but he was in no hurry. He leaned against a brown limestone monument in the shape of a sarcophagus to tap out his pipe and fill it.

Across the street the elegant houses of the town stood stripped of their covering of foliage. Right opposite him was the D'Olier place, almost never opened anymore. He had heard rumors that it was to be pulled down, and it might as well be. No use for handsome houses these days now that handsome manners were gone. Next to the D'Olier house two Doric columns flanked the entrance of Lydia Fenimore's old place, a lovely home, and in his mind he walked through the dim, hushed rooms where each object had a distinction of its own. The center hall ran straight through to the garden so that from the street in summer you had a glimpse of open greenery. It was a house that sheltered rather than contained, a house lightly about one. He thought of the diamond-paned casements open over the garden in Lydia's bedroom, and his lashless eyes kindled with merriment to think how surprised his daughter-in-law would be to know that his memories ranged around Lydia Fenimore's bedroom.

He lit his pipe and coaxed up a glow in the bowl. Charlotte was right. Generally his life had been unbelievably dull and constant. Viola was always there and the town was small and it was easier that way.

When he started seeing Lydia, he thought he had come to the end of his long loneliness, and today as he looked back on that time, it had a different tone from the rest of his life. Lydia talking about someone in her family who

had known Liszt or had seen Chopin, Lydia in a blue velvet negligee that swept the floor, Lydia giving in lightly with a few witty remarks, a sheer delight. The first time he had been in her bedroom there was a rumpled pile of underthings on the floor—she was not a tidy woman like Viola—and this evidence of her humanity had brought to him a wash of tenderness that sharpened his desire. Sometimes when he got home he could scarcely believe in her, and he would go back uptown and by the house to keep the tension on his inspiration.

So he had broken free, transcended the exercises he wrote for the girls at the Hall. For a few short months he was stirred to incandescence and notes flooded his brain, theme on theme, as he walked the streets or lay beside Viola awake for half the night. Sometimes he got up and went down to the front room crazy to get the notes on paper before they blurred.

In the end he had spoiled it all. Poor Lydia. He had expected too much of her. Looking at the house, he saw himself on that last day standing in her spacious entrance hall clutching his roll of music and he thought himself a poor fish for lack of insight. Lydia's laughter had brought down all his illusions. He knew now that his very suffering had been evidence that there was a musician in him. The mistake he had made was not that he had been what he was, but that he had failed to be what he was more fully.

He took a last draw on his pipe and put it in his pocket. Impossible to think that he had been so blind that he did not recognize Lydia Fenimore as a silly woman from the beginning. But he had come to her with such hungry poverty.

The afternoon was full of silence accented by a horn sounding here and there in a distant street and by the fussing of small birds in the cedars behind him. Curled leaves gleamed in the shaggy grass at his feet, and spiders made lines of light from the stones to the turf. Gnats traveling among these lines were bright points. Mr. Gilbert looked up from the minute world at his feet to the buttonwoods along Broad Street holding up mottled naked limbs to the sun. The world had settled into a golden emptiness free of life and growth, love-making and food-getting.

He turned down a path behind some yews and walked into the church at the west transept door. Under the dusky arches lit by moated beams from the clerestory he felt at home. The old rector had said Gilbert's music was his religion. The old rector was a good sort, easy to get along with. This new man had a nervous obligation to his calling that led him to infringe on everybody's privacy.

He turned on the light over the organ and sat at the keyboard. Sending the light figures and deep resonances of a Bach fugue to the furthest corners of the nave, he lost himself in the piece until he felt the presence of someone behind him.

"Excuse me, sir."

It was that numbskull Wiggin, the sexton.

"The rector asked me to tell you, sir, you left the light on over the organ when you were here last Saturday, and would you be more careful. Mrs. Weston was in and complained."

Mr. Gilbert coughed.

"You're mistaken there, Wiggin. I'm always careful. The last thing I do. You're mistaken."

He went back to the keyboard, but he thought it over and turned with a snort of anger to Wiggin.

"I wasn't here on Saturday."

"But, sir, we spoke about the broken branch on the yew as you went out the door."

Mr. Gilbert gave him a contemptuous laugh.

"That's right, but it wasn't Saturday. It was Friday, and if you were right here, why didn't you notice the light was on? I never leave the light on. It's second nature to me to turn it off. I'd have an itch all the way home if I left it on."

He played runs until the sexton was gone. The old busybody. Being up in the seventies convicted a man of all sorts of petty negligence. He would be a fool to think twice about the fellow. He stomped down the aisle and the anger he felt carried him home in a jiffy.

Virginia's school books were in the hall when he got there. She had come early and it nettled him that he had not had time to potter around the empty room and see her come in. His breath came short and he hesitated to open the door. When he did go in, rubbing his hands together, going straight to the piano in a business-like way, seeing her out of the corner of his eye, her head bent as she rubbed rosin into her bow, he was taken aback. The whole complex of his emotion, his building up for this lesson all week, was suddenly ridiculous. She was only a child.

He took his spectacle case out of his pocket, carefully adjusted the glasses behind his ears, and began leafing through sheet music. He had had this lesson planned, gone over it a hundred times when he could not sleep at night, but then his lateness, the thoughts that had intruded on him uptown left him disorganized. He was gruff with her, beginning with the exercises, finding fault with every measure she played. She bit her lip and tried again.

"You don't give it enough time," he said. "Don't rush it. What's your hurry? So—" and his cracked voice vocalized the notes.

He looked at her keenly for the first time.

"Maybe you don't practice. Maybe you have more important things to do."

She gave him a glance from the edges of her long eyes where laughter showed like glints on dark water.

"You were late yourself," she said. "What were you up to?"

So he had not dreamed it. That was her magic, laughter coming through just when she seemed most serious. No woman in his family had ever given him the compliment of suspecting that he was up to something.

"All right. Try the solo. How did that go?"

She placed the music and bent over her violin. Looking at her, it seemed to him that the lens of a telescope through which he had been seeing a blurry picture had suddenly been adjusted to his eye. The old longings rose up as sweet as though his life which was over was not over. He leaned toward the lovely curve made by her neck and shoulder. Her bronze hair brushed her tanned skin lightly. He stretched out his yellow hand with its bulging veins and hard whitish nails that looked as if they were detachable. It might have been a dead sea animal washed up by the tide. A cold sweat came out on his forehead at the thought of the repulsion she must feel toward it.

"That passage again, from the allegro. Staccato but not jerky. Let the melody flow."

He sang the notes as she played. He had not heard a student play as well as she did for years, maybe never. His eyes blurred over with water and he got up from the piano and took out his key and opened the music cabinet. She went right on playing as he sorted out his faded, handwritten sheets and placed the piano arrangement ready. When she finished, he handed her the violin part.

"Something I wrote years ago," he said.

He sat down and started to play. At first Lydia's words came between him and the melody. *Something for me? A piece for me just like you write for all your little girls at the Hall. You are a funny one. It's pretty. Now will you let me go and finish dressing?* Gradually as he played, the themes soothed the old wound his thoughts had opened up. They wove themselves into a whole and, by God, he knew that it was good. At the distance of all these years he could hear it as someone else's and it was good.

When it was finished, Virginia said nothing. She turned to him with a puzzled frown. He was engrossed by the loveliness of her face.

"Well?" he said.

"You wrote it?"

"A long time ago. For somebody."

"Didn't you ever publish it or play it anywhere?"

She recognized it then. Exhilaration flowered in him like a cabbage rose.

"You like it?" he said.

"Like it? It's very sad. I can't believe you wrote it. May I take it to show our orchestra leader in school? I'll be very careful."

Mr. Gilbert sniffed. That young fellow over at the high school would never take time to read it and if he did, he was too timid to trust his own judgment. It didn't matter. It didn't matter. He handed her the roll without looking directly at her.

"Take it. It's been locked up here for years. Do what you want with it."

When she was gone, he sat down. He had not noticed the shortness of breath all during the lesson, but it was good to have her gone, to be alone with his desire for her. And the sonata was gone too. In Virginia's hand it had taken on a life apart from him. It was after all for her that he had written it. It's being gone left a clean and empty feeling that reminded him of spring days when Viola had turned out the room, taken down the curtains and opened the windows for the first time.

He got up and snapped the lock on the door hoping those people out there would forget him for a little while. He did not want to meet their eyes. He wanted to keep close this new freedom and completeness. He closed his eyes, not to sleep, just to rest them.



DABNEY STUART

Watermusic

1. The river runs clear
to the bottom of sadness
into a friend
memory
written on water.

It's possible to fish
for trout in it, love
the child drawn into its sunlight,
my
speckled heart
ranging
in the clearwater strata.

Combed grasses in the current,
falls of light spooling
under the loose calls,
windings
of my name riffling
up:

nothing could be more beautiful.

The river runs clear
through the bottom of time

2. into the same childfriend sitting
on a bench, hugging his knee
with one arm, looking
at light
dance through his pennywhistle—

bright chromeliquid shadows
flowing
nowhere

into the future
our
drift, our depth.

A Story by
CLAUDE KOCH

Myths

He *shriveld and shriveld and becam a grashoper*. Sister Sapientia pressed the red pencil to her lips and waved her left index finger in a circular motion.

"Rachel," she said, "come to the front of the class, please."

Far beyond the windows of St. Jude's Elementary, open to all the petitionings of spring, down near the Square and the Monument to Heroes, perhaps Mr. Sifer would be sitting erect, his cane on the porch floor by his side, and his eyes that were always wide and in which there was no light, and that always fixed themselves at some point above her head (where the angel hovered that guarded her)—perhaps he would be watching for the sound of her feet. Rachel could see him when he was there, and when he wasn't there. But he could not see her at all.

"Rachel," Sister Sapientia tapped her pencil. Rachel turned her head from the window and rubbed her eyes. For the moment the image of Mr. Sifer was there in the front of the room, and not an elderly nun whose patience was proverbial. "Will you come back to us please. Now, about your spelling..."

Down by the Square and the Monument to Heroes the small birds sang. Mr. Sifer, who was indeed sitting on his porch and who perked his head toward the voice of the house finch, stood, retrieved his cane, and took three steady steps from the wicker rocker to the porch railing, four down to the lawn, nine along the garden path, and then leaned gratefully into the rotating spray. He was standing in the spray when Rachel came by from school.

"You're wet." It was not reproachful, but a statement of fact.

"So, you've noticed."

Rachel walked around the spray toward the herb garden. "I'm over here now."

"I know where you are. Don't think...because I didn't turn around that you're fooling me."

Rachel pirouetted beyond the spray. "Can I get wet?"

"Well, I don't know what your folks would say, but you only live once." Mr. Sifer swung his cane in the spray like Charlie Chaplin.

It was the sixth year of the War, and if it hadn't been for Sister Sapientia's insistence on a special prayer each morning, and Father and Mother's occasional sigh on the reading of the names in the paper, Rachel—like much of Wallingford—would hardly have known it was still going on.

"I'm tired of this War," Rachel had said. "I'm going to ask Mr. Sifer why they don't stop."

"I wouldn't do that," Father stuck his lower lip out as he always did when he wanted something 'to be clearly understood.'

"That's right, dear," Mother had settled it. "Don't get him thinking of it. It does no good."

So she had “let it go.” But other people had come back, and some were brothers and some were fathers, and so classmates had tales to tell.

“I wish we had a television.” At least that way the war would be fun.

“We’ve settled that.” Father’s lip came out again. “When you’re older. It’s something we can live without. Right now we’ve got the mortgage—an immediate problem.” Father taught at the small Catholic college on the edge of Wallingford and, unlike Sr. Sapientia, seemed always worried about money. There are apparently many things in the offing “When you’re older...”

But that was all in the past, and now there was the spray.

“What happened was,” Rachel said, “Titonia shriveled and shriveled and became a grasshopper.” She sat in the grass. “I’m sitting down.”

Mr. Sifer crossed through the spray.

“Here,” she said.

“Do you mean Tithonis?”

“I said.” Rachel reached for his hand. “Here.”

“Pull the beach chairs over,” he said, “then we can dry off.”

Rachel wrestled with a chair. “Eos loved him. But she didn’t ask for immortality.”

“Immortality,” said Mr. Sifer. “Yes, it’s an old story. Where did you hear it?”

“Sappy,” She said, “Sappy told us.”

“So...Sister Sapientia. I seem to remember that. When I thought *she* was immortal. Then I began to shrivel.” He leaned toward Rachel and extended a forefinger: “Your Eos was a goddess. She asked for immortality for him, but she didn’t ask for eternal youth. She forgot that men are mortal.” His voice softened and drifted off: “And women too.”

“I’m mortal,” said Rachel happily.

Mr. Sifer turned his head and the fixed and sightless eyes confronted the hovering angel.

“Yes...,” He extended his hand again, and Rachel placed it on the arm of the canvas chair, “and Sister Sapientia, do you think *she* asks for immortality?”

“She asked me how to spell ‘grasshopper,’ and other things.”

“That’s the way with nuns—first things first.”

They were silent, and Rachel could separate the fall of spray from the call of a cardinal in the sycamore behind them. Suddenly she said: “And a lady became a tree.”

“A laurel?” Mr. Sifer placed his cane on the ground by the chair and sat. “One lady certainly did.”

“A man chased her. He was a Pollo. I never saw a laurel. When Pollo caught her, her arms became branches and she became a laurel.” She leaned forward and whispered: “Mr. Sifer, did you ever see...Do you know what a laurel is?”

“I remember Sister Sapientia’s class,” Mr Sifer said. “She didn’t use the blackboard very much. I see she hasn’t changed. I remember she always said ‘Use your ears.’ Yes. There’s one over by the Monument. It was planted years ago—just after World War I. Would you like to walk over and look at it? Tomorrow? We’re a bit wet today.”

“All right,” Rachel said. “Sappy” calls it the Monument to Heroes.”

“It’s official name is Veterans Monument. Why don’t we leave it at that.”

"Sure," She stood. "Now I'm going home. Why is 'Sappy' Sister Mary Sapientia, and my second grade Sister was Sister Teresa McGuckin?"

"Walk me around the spray," Mr. Sifer said. "Sister McGuckin is New Church."

"Gee, a New Church. That must be fun. But I don't understand."

"In time, in time," he held out his hand. They avoided the spray. But before she went home, and after—without thinking—she had waved goodbye to Mr. Sifer, Rachel ran through the spray again. It was glorious.

Rachel didn't think it odd, the way they had met. It was the way things were—one discovery after another. Hadn't she found that family of baby moles under the witch hazel at the fence to Mrs. McCluskey's yard on High Street?

She had told Father and Mother that night at dinner: "He's blind," she said suddenly, "like the moles. I helped him across the street."

"What?" Father had had a bad day. He was mumbling about "like" and "as." "Listen to them—the newspeople. How can we have correct grammar if all they say is "Tell it like it was, like it is, etc., etc.?"

Mother was sympathetic, as always: "Yes, but that's the way it is—I don't see what anyone can do about it anymore. Now just rest and eat your pasta."

"Who's blind?" Father said.

"Mr. Sifer. He was waiting at the corner. He lives near the Monument."

"Oh, yes," Mother consulted the papers assiduously. "You remember, we read about his coming home. He'd been in the hospital a long while. He was still in Viet Nam when we moved here. I think he lives with a parent—there doesn't appear to be anyone else in the house."

"No, I don't remember," Father was in a recalcitrant mood. "But I guess it's all right. I mean, he must be well now, poor fellow."

"He said he could hear a bird hop and a mouse tiptoe," Rachel sighed. "And the ants make a terrible racket hauling things."

"Um," Father said; "well, that may be a matter of opinion."

Mother just smiled.

The next day wasn't much better, spelling-wise—though she would have to be careful how she told her Father. "Spelling-wise," she had learned at the top of his voice, was a "barbarism."

"How do you spell 'barbarism,' Father?" she had made the mistake of saying once. "What does it mean?"

"I'll spell it," he said. "Write it down. Then *you* go to the dictionary." She was gradually learning that certain questions might be indiscreet.

The next day they learned of heroes. Sister Sapientia mentioned Saints in passing, but she seemed "hung up" (*barbarism!*) on some Greeks and Romans.

"I don't mind this—in fact it is fine," Father said in a tone making very clear that it was not, "but we *are* sending her to a Catholic school. When is she going to learn of St. Catherine and the Wheel, and the like of that. Fine figures of Renaissance art, objects of reverence. The Greeks and Romans are due later....Of course she'll need them: allusions, etc., etc...."

Oh dear! Rachel had learned to sigh from her Mother.

But after class, Mr Sifer was sitting on the porch and the spray was not functioning. He must have heard her footsteps, because he came down the steps. Rachel said timidly: "Who turns it on, Mr. Sifer?"

"My father does, Rachel."

"Gosh!" He was so old to have a Father.

He doesn't get around very well, but we split the tasks." He spoke over her head. "It's important, you know."

She did not know, but there were other questions. "Are you going to wear your green and yellow and brown jacket? Everyone from the War does."

"No, Rachel. I don't have it anymore."

"You don't?"

Mr. Sifer reached out his hand.

The Monument was actually farther than she thought, though Mr. Sifer did not seem to mind. Could he have counted all of these steps? She held his hand, and he walked with a steady assurance, his cane quite elegantly employed. She felt a small pride in this evidence of his confidence in her.

They walked down High Street—pretty this time of year, with spring flowers in the window boxes of stores, and great urns of ivy at every corner. "I love the spring," she said. "Don't you love spring?"

Mr. Sifer smiled at her from far above her head: "Spring is when Persephone returns from Hades. Didn't Sister Sapientia tell you? She once told me."

"No! Did she really?"

"Indeed." Mr. Sifer swung his cane in a small arc, "Isn't this about Maule's Lane?"

"Almost. We'll have to wait here. It's a red light."

"Though she was eager," Mr. Sifer said, "it is hard to return from Hades." He stopped, and tentatively reached his hand to touch her head. "Hard," he repeated. "But *she* did, and the flowers grew again after the long winter."

She ran ahead of him and turned at the curb. There was an odd tightening in his face. She caught his hand and said: "Mr. Sifer, can a blind man cry?"

"I've heard it said that even a stone can cry."

"No...!" she stamped a foot. "You're making fun of me."

"My dear, I was talking to myself." He pointed with his cane: "Now you can see it over there—the tree by the Monument is a laurel."

Rachel guided him across the street.

Out of the plot of white impatiens rose the Monument: a dark metal figure as tall as Mr. Sifer, helmeted and armed, and displaying a scroll. Behind it the lancet leaves of a tree with clusters of small yellowish flowers blocked the sun.

"What does it say?" She spelled out: "T-h-e-s-e—a-r-e—t-h-e—D-e-a-d—, —S-h-o-r-t—d-a-y-s—a-g-o..." What is that?"

"Never mind. It's a few lines from an old poem."

"What's he holding? Will you lift me up...?"

She reached for him as though he could see.

"Yes. Come here."

He held his cane in its middle and she bobbed up under his outstretched arms.

"Do you know," he said, but not really to her, "I've never held a child." Then: "Rachel, you are all air and curiosity."

Rachel smiled: "I am not."

She waited patiently while he adjusted her to a seat on his left forearm and moved the cane in gently against the flowers. "So, now that's close enough. Now you can see."

"There are names on this thing. Some are new. Is yours..."

"No, dear. These are the dead of three previous wars—all of them before you were born."

"So many?"

"So many."

"Oh." She raised her head to the face of the statue. No pupils marked the eyes. "But he can't see," she said. "I mean..."

"You are right in what you mean, Rachel," Mr. Sifer said. He lowered her gently: "These are the dead, who speak for the dead."

Rachel felt a chill. "I don't understand."

Mr. Sifer's voice was soft: "I wish you would never have to understand."

"But I want to—I want to know..."

"It is always so."

"Aw...", she reached up tentatively and touched his face: "Don't cry," she said. "You are crying. That's a tear." She drew a finger along his cheek.

"No," Mr. Sifer said. "I'm allergic to laurel. Come now, we'd better go. Your mother and father will wonder how you've spent this afternoon."

"Oh, they know," Rachel said. "I told them we walk together."

"They don't mind?"

"No." Her tone was bewildered.

"Some would mind. It's nice that they don't."

"I don't understand."

"Good." Mr. Sifer took her hand. All the way home he was silent, and Rachel felt oddly impressed to silence herself. At the steps to Mr. Sifer's porch she said: "I'll be by tomorrow too."

"Come here." Mr. Sifer kissed her forehead. It was clumsy, and he bumped his chin against her nose. They laughed.

"Thank you, Rachel."

And all the way home she pondered that afternoon.

The next day, Sister Sapientia spoke of the noble dead, the Elysian Fields, and Aeneas. Her face, normally so placid, so composed, flushed and glowed. It was the best of the story hours.

Three days passed before she saw Mr. Sifer again (Father was "cleaning house of all unnecessary papers, clothes, and whatnot," and participation was mandatory). He was sitting on his porch, and he looked the way Father and Mother looked toward the end of the month when the bills were due. He seemed not to hear her as she mounted the steps. "I know all about the Lesian Fields," she said. "Aeneas went to the underworld. Are you all right?"

"My father is not well. He fell and injured his leg." Mr. Sifer took out his wallet. "Would you go to the store for me? I don't want to leave him. Normally

I'd go. It's an easy walk." He smiled. "It's just around the corner. I can count the steps."

When she returned with a loaf of bread, a half-pound of butter, and a pack of cigarettes, she said: "My Father doesn't smoke. He says its expensive."

"Well, Rachel, my father is seventy years old and he's smoked all his life. It's too late for him to reform."

"Shall I go back and get you some?"

"No, my dear. I don't much care for smoke. I've had unfortunate experiences with it."

"Then shall I tell you about Aeneas?"

"Let me take these up to my patient. I'll be right back." At the door he turned and said: "That would be a delight."

The next day it rained, a soft and somnolent shower, and Rachel nodded under the spell of scents of Persephone's flowers. Sister Sapientia rapped her desk, gently, because she understood the enchantment. "Today we will talk about Troy," she said, "and over the weekend, I expect you to write an essay on Heroic Virtue. Remember that the Hero is one favored by the gods." She smiled a small, comforting smile. "It is like the gift of Grace that Father Logan spoke about on Sunday. You see, it has an old history." The calm voice was mesmerizing, and the journey was long, and Rachel moved in and out of a sly moment of delight until the bell brought her back to the tapping of the rain on the half-opened windows.

It was Mr. Sifer's spray, increased a hundredfold—not in intensity, but in range. She imagined she walked with Mr. Sifer as she made her way home—posing questions and gathering mysterious answers.

At the house the porch was empty. She swung on the gate, undecided. There was, momentarily, a figure at a second floor window, and for the first time she *saw* the house, unlike her own that crowded in a brick row on an old brick Wallingford street and in whose closeness she was always safe.

To Rachel, its Victorian embellishments suggested great antiquity and unimaginable wealth; and the great maples that loomed over it, a forest silence. She ceased to swing on the gate. She wondered if two people could lose themselves in such shadowed space. She thought of Aeneas and the palace at Troy as Sister Sapientia had imaged it for her. Mr. Sifer came to the door, and for the first time Rachel hesitated to greet him. He walked with his usual assurance down the porch steps into the pleasant rain, and stood with the stillness that she had not realized before was the most comforting thing about him. Then he turned and mounted the steps. When the door closed behind him Rachel was bewildered. She had not spoken to him. Did she take it for granted that he would know she was there? What gifts of sight not relying on mortal eyes had she assumed for him? At supper that night she had many questions.

"The house seems big to you," Father said, "but actually it's a typical clapboard structure of the 1870's—clapboard and stone, to be precise." (Father prided himself on being precise.) "They do have a nice piece of ground."

"I imagine," Mother said, "that two people would find it a bit too much room." She touched Rachel's hair: "Perhaps once there were other children; the family may have lived here for generations."

"Like Aeneas," Rachel said.

"The major difference is indoor plumbing," Father rustled the paper. "I see it will shower again tomorrow."

It did.

Saturdays Father devoted to his family. Sometimes this was a strain, because it meant "Doing something." This Saturday, because Father was falling behind Sister Sapientia, it meant visiting the Room of Classical Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. The horn at the station of the Volunteer Fire Brigade was sounding as they drove down High Street. "This shower will help," Father said. He also said "Damn" as a dedicated Volunteer forced him to the curb.

"Oh, look, look, it's Mr. Sifer's!"

Father took a U-turn and parked. A small, aimless crowd was gathering. A single fireman shouted instructions. Acrid smoke billowed from a second floor window. They crossed the street as a belling engine pulled up behind them.

They pressed to the fence.

"Oh, what can we do, Mother...?"

"You two stay here," Father said. "I'll see if I can help."

"All right, you people—back across the street. Get going." A policeman headed Father off.

"Well, let's do what they say," Father waved. "Now, just where did that child go?"

Rachel was in the shrubbery by the pool when Mr. Sifer stumbled out the front doorway carrying an old man. But what had happened to the door? Two firemen took his burden; then Rachel saw Mr. Sifer waver and crumple down the porch steps that he had always managed so skillfully. She reached him first as he lay on the garden walk. "His head," she tried to say. "Look...look..." But her throat was dry, and under the pounding of her heart she choked on the words.

As she was picked up and carried away she heard the strained, unfamiliar voices, compounded of smoke and an alien stifling odor.

"My God, he's blind..."

"Here! Over here...! Oxygen...!"

"Not there...the old man's gone...!"

"Medic...medic...!"

The fireman deposited her with a policeman at the curb.

"Now, go home. Don't come back, you hear me...?"

Then Father and Mother were there. As she clung to Mother, Father said: "I think we *had* better go home."

"It's a mild sedative," Mother said. "I think she should rest."

Father was unusually quiet and concerned. He did not mention that she had wandered off from them by the fence. While Mother settled her in bed,

Father stood by—not at all like Sister Sapientia's Zeus as Rachel had come to envision him, but helpless and gentle. "Will she be all right?" he said. "Should we phone the doctor?"

"No. I think she'll sleep."

Rachel heard all this at a great distance. The rain had ceased, and the grasshoppers sang outside her window. She dreamed. She was Eos, and she asked for eternal life for Mr. Sifer. Then he reached a hand to her, and she flourished as a laurel tree. But as he bent down she saw his face, and the wound that bled in his forehead, and she awoke, crying.

She came downstairs at suppertime—not to eat, but to sit on the porch. Now, under the fireflies, the moles could see Persephone walking the earth, and the flowers springing up beneath her feet. And she thought how the dark god of the underworld might this moment be releasing Mr. Sifer to live forever in that enduring light that glowed in Sister Sapientia's eyes. She dozed in the porch rocker. Then Father carried her back to bed.

Sunday morning, Father hid the newspaper. But it made no difference: at the Children's Mass Mr. Sifer and his father were remembered ("An old parishioner and an old student of St. Jude's for whom we pray."). Yet Rachel was sure he was not wherever they thought, but clear-sighted and hale, and striding among the amaranthine flowers as "Sister said."

After Mass she walked though another sudden gentle sweep of rain to the Monument—along a back street, in air weighted with the scent of witch hazel and wild clematis. It was not hard, once there, to believe that the blind eyes wept. She could reach the bottom of the scroll with her index finger. On it she traced "Mr. Sifer—and saw it wash away.

She huddled against the laurel, and had no name for what she had lost.



A Story By
MAGGIE RINDFUSS

Catching the Light

Marian Davis told the flight attendant on Delta #546 from Charlotte “no” for the third time in the last hour. She didn’t care for anything to drink, thank you. They seemed to be stuck on the runway. “Mechanical trouble,” the flight attendant said through a tight little smile.

Marian was getting restless. She closed her book, a modern romance billed as a crime thriller, and dropped it into the seat pocket in front of her. She finger-combed her springy gray-brown curls. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she watched the boy sitting next to her begin his third glass of Coca-Cola.

For the last hour Marian had tried not to stare, but she couldn’t seem to keep her gaze from drifting sideways. Her seatmate’s looks, quite simply, astonished her. He was dressed all in black—shirt, jacket, jeans, shoes, even a black neckscarf. His hair and skin, on the other hand, were so light, so thin and colorless, she thought the dark heavy clothing he wore might bruise him.

But the most amazing thing of all to Marian was the boy’s nose. There, on the left side, was a thin gold ring slipped through the flesh like a fishhook. The boy also had a ring in his ear, but that was almost ordinary now—it was years ago that Sifuentes started wearing an earring on “L.A. Law.” But a nose ring! A nose ring made the young man sitting next to Marian a genuine curiosity. As soon as he finished his Coke-drinking, she was going to find out all she could about him.

“Tell me,” she said as he set down his plastic cup, “are you going to New York to visit family?” It was hard to imagine this boy had any relatives, he was so alien-looking, but she thought it was a good way to begin the conversation. And since he was dressed all in black, maybe he was going to a funeral, maybe a family member had passed away.

Marian’s daughter often accused her of being uncontrollably nosy, a terrible busybody, but Marian preferred to think of herself as someone deeply interested in the welfare of her fellow man. Just like now. She wanted to know if her seatmate needed a little boosting up before going home for a funeral. But the boy said, “No, ma’am. I don’t know a soul in New York. I’m only going for the weekend.”

“My goodness,” Marian blurted, “you’re a Southern boy. I thought for sure you were a New Yorker. No offense,” she continued, leaning closer, “it’s just that most of the young people at home are...” Marian was at a loss for words. For the life of her, she couldn’t think how to finish the sentence. “Plainer looking,” she finally said.

Oh, Lord. I didn’t mean to point out his strangeness like that, Marian thought, I’ve probably made him feel like a misfit. But the boy didn’t seem to mind. He smiled and said he was from China Grove, a town Marian knew from driving to her cousin’s poultry farm in Landis.

She introduced herself.

"It's nice to meet you," the boy said, "I'm John Travis Bond." He offered her his hand.

"I've been wondering about the purpose of your trip, Mr. Bond," Marian said. His fingers felt light and thin as wishbones against her palm.

"Well, I guess you could say the purpose is educational," John Travis replied. "I'm hoping to get accepted at Parson's School of..."

Just then the captain interrupted to say he was sorry for the inconvenience, but they would be on the ground for another thirty minutes. He'd leave the "Fasten Seatbelt" sign on for their safety. Mechanical difficulties.

Marian paid no attention to the captain on the intercom. She was busy running her seatmate's words through her head. If she heard him right, it sounded like he was on his way to New York City to become a preacher! Marian gave up her religion two years ago when her daughter Kate ran away to become a rhythm and blues singer, but this was too much. A ghostlike, ear-ringed, nose-ringed preacher!

But her daughter probably wouldn't even be surprised when she told her. Marian was on her way to Kate's now. Kate, who was nineteen years old and having a baby. Kate, who didn't have a husband and, if you could believe her, didn't want a husband. It was crazy. No wonder young men like John Travis were going around with rings in their noses.

"Mr. Bond," Marian said, trying to keep her voice steady, "you might be interested in a church I pass on my way to work. Its sign says 'New Age Fellowship'." She stared at the boy's nose. "Is that the type of ministry you'll be considering?"

John Travis Bond turned in his seat and looked straight at Marian, then shook his head and laughed. "Ma'am," he said, "I plan to be an artist, not a preacher. Parson's is an art school. Parson's School of Design. It's where I'm going to interview."

Marian wasn't the least bit embarrassed by her misunderstanding, just relieved. "Well now, isn't that wonderful," she said. She decided she could relax again, and reached into the seat pocket for her book. But now John Travis wanted to talk.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

Marian showed him the book, *B is for Burglar*. "She's going to do the whole alphabet," Marian told him.

John Travis said he preferred science fiction, but at the moment he was too tense to read. He wouldn't be able to keep his mind on it.

"Are you worried about your interview?" Marian asked. She wished her daughter were as communicative as this young man was. Kate never answered her letters, and their phone conversations, when Kate *had* a phone, were always disappointing.

"Well, yeah, I guess I am," John Travis said, "but right now I'm more worried about this plane. About the mechanical difficulties. I just don't believe them. They never keep the seatbelt sign on this long, especially when you're just sitting on the runway."

Marian wasn't worried. No doubt John Travis had a pretty lively imagination, being an artist as well as a reader of science fiction. And he probably had to go to the bathroom. She didn't blame him for being upset. If she'd had three

Coca-Colas she'd be in agony now, too. She was just about to suggest he get up and go anyway when a ruckus started in the front of the plane.

Marian, who was sitting in the aisle seat, could see a small dark-haired woman being escorted toward the exit door. She was screaming, "Get your hands off me" and pushing her body at a man who seemed to be holding her by the wrists. What on earth, Marian thought. She might have known a plane trip to New York would start out this way. She wished she could see more but a flight attendant blocked her view. The man across the aisle was craning his neck too.

"Sometimes they overbook," he said to Marian.

"What's going on?" John Travis asked, unable to see much from his position by the window.

Marian filled him in on what she could, telling him what the girl had on (an olive trenchcoat), and that she looked to be about his age. But what she didn't tell him, was that the flailing young woman reminded her of her daughter. Kate had her sweet side, but she could be just as wild and ornery as this woman was. While the captain was apologizing for the commotion, Marian found herself wondering if Kate had ever been thrown off a public conveyance.

Soon after they were airborne, John Travis headed for the restroom, just as Marian had predicted. She watched him walk back down the aisle a few minutes later, his fine white head bobbing above the seatbacks in the darkened cabin.

"I'm on my way to visit my daughter," she said as he climbed over her thickly nyloned legs. "She lives on West 23rd Street."

"That's nice," John Travis said while falling into his seat.

"Well, I'm afraid it's not going to be so nice. She's going to have a baby. It's due any time now, in fact it's overdue, and she hasn't got a husband." Marian knew she was telling John Travis too much, but she couldn't help herself. She didn't think he'd be shocked at least, being so shocking-looking himself.

"You know, that's not so unusual," he said as he took the foil off the dinner tray set before him. "And not so bad, as long as she's sure it's what she wants. That's how I feel about art school. It's what I really want to do."

Marian couldn't believe her good fortune. John Travis not only wasn't shocked, he seemed genuinely sympathetic. For the next two hours she talked about Kate, about the voice and piano lessons she'd provided even though it was a stretch on her secretary's salary, about how Kate's father ran off when she was five, and then Kate herself when she was seventeen.

John Travis told Marian his folks were tobacco farmers, had been for generations, and that they weren't too happy about his going to New York. "They don't appreciate my artwork at all," he said, especially my father. Once I did a painting of a child wearing a gas mask and he pinned a picture of Jesse Helms on top of it." Marian didn't know what to make of that. She felt she was saved from saying anything, though, because it was almost time to land.

While she was busy coloring and blotting her lips in preparation for arrival, John Travis started playing with the foil he'd saved from his dinner tray. First he smoothed out the flat rectangular piece. Then, in quick motions, he folded

and bent it until it took the shape of a swan, silver-bodied and perfectly formed. He offered his creation to Marian.

"It's for the baby," he said. "You can hang it up for him to look at."

Marian grabbed John Travis's hand and squeezed it. "It's so beautiful," she said. She twirled the bird in a circle on her armrest, then searched her handbag for a tissue to wrap it in.

As the plane descended over La Guardia, Marian checked the airport bus schedule Kate had sent her and asked John Travis how he was getting to his school. "They're sending someone to meet me," he said.

"Well, I guess this is it then. It's been a pleasure." Marian smiled one more time into John Travis's parchment-white face and said good-bye. She asked for his address in China Grove and promised to write after they both returned home. She made him promise to write back, "I want to know if you get into that Parson's School," she said.

After a tearful reunion on the doorstep of Kate's apartment, Marian spent her first night in New York on a rollaway bed, talking with her daughter. She watched Kate throughout the night for signs of labor, not letting the street sounds coming in through the windows distract her from her task. By the time of first light, she was sitting in the backseat of a cab on the way to the hospital, her arm firmly around her daughter's shoulders.

While the nurses got Kate settled in her room, Marian took an elevator to the hospital concessions area looking for ham biscuits and a newspaper. She returned to the waiting room with a sackful of bagels and a copy of *USA Today*. When she was about halfway through the paper, she read something that caused her breath to catch. There, tucked away in the North Carolina section, was a report on the incident on the plane yesterday. It said the woman who caused the disturbance, a twenty-one year old Shelby resident, had escaped from police custody earlier in the day, and was suspected of smuggling a weapon through airport security!

This was incredible, to think she and John Travis had been so close to danger without even knowing it. What a story she'd have for Kate when the nurses let her into the room! John Travis, she had to admit, had been suspicious all along. But this surely meant something, to share a near-death experience with someone as unusual as he was. At the first opportunity, she was going to write to him and enclose the newspaper story. She was glad she'd thought to ask for his address before they parted.

Several hours later, from the side of Kate's bed, Marian began her letter to John Travis. On checkered graph paper from the nurses' station, she wrote:

Dear John Travis,

This will surely come as a surprise, hearing from me so soon, but there are some things I couldn't wait to tell you. The first is that Kate's had the baby! Just about four hours ago, a beautiful little girl. You were right about Kate, she seems to love the baby. I'm hoping all that wildness might be gone for good. She's already gotten herself a roommate, and the two of them are going to take turns going to work and caring for Clarissa, that's what she's calling the baby.

The other thing I found out is that the troublesome woman on our plane, the one in the trenchcoat, was a fugitive from justice. They also think she was armed. I have enclosed a newspaper clipping so you can read the story for yourself. Can you believe how close to danger we were? Kate thinks the woman was probably unjustly accused of something and needed to defend herself, but I'm not so sure.

Now, getting back to you. I hope your interview at the Parson's School went fine. Some day I expect to see an exhibit of your paintings when I go to New York to visit Kate and Clarissa. I just know you have a lot of talent, I could tell by the bird. Kate thanks you very much for the baby gift. She likes the way it catches the light. Did I tell you she also thinks nose rings are attractive?

Warmest regards,

Marian Davis

○ ○ ○ ○

DANIEL BURKE, FSC

Teacher's Valediction

This is your last class
and, in my terrible absent-mindedness,
I'm still trying to recall
that one talismanic word
you'll need out there,
to make it all work.
I know I had it once
(two syllables—or was it one, perhaps?
—ending with *e*, I think).
Otherwise it's so very risky,
the satisfactions are so uncertain,
putting it together, difficult,
to say the least,
and, good Lord,
I'd like to save you
from all that,
if I could.

KATHARINE PRIVETT

Turtle

Scored pattern, hinged plate
carapace: footed, amber-lidded,
oval box that moves, oh so slowly
along its chosen path.

The shell inches in a line, sure
and deliberate and with something
treasured, ancient and alive, inside.

Like a saint's remains enshrined—
prized, precious—a high-curved
reliquary, a venerable casket
that rouses and wheels revolving
with intent; resolving course by
trudge and mill, shift and trace
design. Concealed terrapin,
bronze-cased, hidden cache which
blazes brazen in the sudden slope
and template embrace of the sun.

A Story By
MARY FARR JORDAN

College Visit

“Rotten weather!” he said to the hotel clerk when he came down for the complimentary coffee and doughnut. It was six in the morning, and a gusty wind was slapping sleet against the plate glass windows on the northeast side of the lobby.

“That’s February for you,” she said in a smoker’s raspy voice. She was bent over the coffee pot, easing a folded napkin under the spout to catch the drip. “But it won’t last. You know what they say about Boston weather — if you don’t like it, wait twenty minutes.”

“Now that’s a coincidence,” he said. “We’ve got the same expression in Texas.”

“You from Texas?” She glanced up at him. Her straight, blunt-cut gray hair was not much longer than his. A no-nonsense lady. Ken guessed she was about sixty, ten years or so older than himself.

“I’m from outside of San Antonio. Supposed to attend the contractors’ convention here, but I really came up to see my son Billy. He’s a freshman.” He gestured towards Harvard Square. “Haven’t been able to reach him yet, though. Flew in yesterday afternoon. He probably forgot what time I was getting in.”

“Well, you know kids. Always on the go.” She straightened up. “My son was stationed a while at Fort Hood. They sure speak a different language down in Texas. Kevin could really make me laugh. He’d tell me the Texas boys would say coffee at the Base was too thick to drink and too thin to plow.” She smiled at the recollection. “He’s in Saudi Arabia now.”

“I hope that war’s over soon,” he said sympathetically. “We do talk different,” he added. “We see weather like this and say it’s cold enough to freeze the horns off a longhorn steer!” He peeled open a small container of cream and stirred the contents into his coffee. “I like my coffee whitewashed,” he said.

The hotel clerk laughed.

“I’m Ken Roberts,” he said, extending his hand. “Call me Ken.”

“Nice to meet you, Ken. I’m Pat Walsh.”

The elevator doors opened and two Japanese businessmen emerged.

Pat Walsh walked back behind the reception desk. “I’m on until two,” she said. “Let me know if there’s anything you need.”

“Thanks.” He swallowed a last mouthful of hot coffee that disintegrated the remaining piece of doughnut in his mouth, and then dropped his cup into a cylindrical can with a swinging lid. As he climbed the three flights up to his room he thought that if he waited until 8:45 to call, he wouldn’t annoy Billy by waking him up; by that time his son would probably be getting ready to go to class.

The sleet had stopped. Directly across the street he could see Charlie's Kitchen and the Dutch Flower Garden. Funny how different-looking the two businesses were. The dark red-brick facade of the restaurant had a grimy, inner-city appearance. Dirty smoke curled out of a thin chimney at the back. The neat clapboard flowershop was painted light blue; contrasting dark blue awnings shaded the windows on the ground floor and the floor above. Actually, almost every building he could see between his hotel and Harvard Square seemed incompatible with the one next to it. That couldn't be helped, he supposed; in an old city people's tastes inevitably changed over time. You should never expect to be able to control city growth. He watched an American flag snap in the wind at the top of a distant bookstore. Personally, though, he liked the wasted space of the older buildings. The sight of the ancient freshman dorms in the Yard had made him wish he could have been a student at Harvard too.

He was so proud of Billy. His boy had been smart enough to get into such a good school. Who would have thought it possible? Juanita would have been proud too, God rest her soul. They'd both put in a lot of time with Billy, who'd been all the more precious to them because he'd arrived after ten years of marriage, and was the only child they'd been able to have. They'd wanted the best for him. We've got to read to him, read to him all the time, Juanita had said. When he was five, they read him the Uncle Wiggily stories, but it was the myths that captured his imagination, especially the adventures of Theseus, and the tale of Athena springing fully armed from the head of Zeus.

Later, Juanita had read more to Billy than he had, but he had spent long hours on cub scout projects and soccer fields. "Look at me, Papa!" Billy would shout when he mastered a new physical skill that helped him earn another badge. "You're the champ!" Ken would exclaim, leaving whatever he was doing to admire Billy's latest accomplishment. Whenever he'd shown Billy how to do something, such as how to tie a difficult knot, Billy would smack his forehead with the palm of his hand and say "I could have done that!" and Ken would respond, "Of course you could have, a smart boy like you!"

Ken had always considered it an advantage to be an independent contractor; his flexible schedule had meant that he could spend more time with Billy, and take those afternoons off to coach soccer. Billy had worried that the other kids would think his father didn't have a job, but at the end he must have been grateful, Ken thought; he'd turned out to be a smooth, crafty soccer player.

He looked at his watch. Twenty to nine. Late enough to take a chance that Billy was awake. While the phone rang he watched a man in a blue smock arrange a huge pile of baskets on the sidewalk in front of the Dutch Flower Garden.

Billy answered on the eighth ring.

"Bill Roberts here," he said crisply.

Ken waited a moment, almost not recognizing his son's voice. "Billy, this is Papa. I got into Cambridge yesterday. How you doing?"

"Busy. I was just on my way out; I thought it might be you."

"I tried to get you last night."

"I wouldn't have heard the phone; I turned it down to study for a history test."

A sharp gust of wind blew a basket off the top of the pile into the street.

"You have any free time today? It'd be nice to see you. I don't have to go to any of my meetings."

There was silence at the other end of the line. "I've got a pretty tight schedule," Billy finally said. "You want to come to my math class?"

"That'd be okay. I'm afraid I won't understand much of it, though."

"I can meet you at the John Harvard statue at eleven. That's across from Hollis, my dorm. Can you find it?"

"I'll find it," said Ken, not wanting to admit that he'd reconnoitered the Yard the previous afternoon. He'd hoped he might run into Billy.

"See you then," said Billy. He hung up before Ken could ask him if he would go to lunch with him afterwards.

The class met in a dirty brick building with sagging wooden floors and dim lights. Billy directed him to a dark corner of the room. "No one sits over there," he said. Ken sat in a chair designed for a left-handed person; Billy positioned himself at the end of the front row. Ken considered his son's large head, and thick, blond hair curling over the collar. Tall, fair, big-boned, Billy didn't really take after either him or Juanita.

The math was sure to be over his head. He'd been good in math in high school and junior college, and had once speculated to Billy that he might have acquired a little of his talent from him. Billy had responded, "Well anything's possible; genetics are a crazy thing." Ken watched lines of unreadable figures appear on the board as fast as if they were coming out of a staple gun. The teacher was talking with his back to the students while he wrote. Some of the boys — they were all boys, he'd noticed, no girls — were writing as though in a trance, never lowering their heads, their eyes riveted to the blackboard. Ken looked down at his lap.

At the end of class, Ken couldn't find Billy at first in the jumble of students, but then saw him in the hall outside talking to a short dark-haired girl in a red parka.

"There you are," he said, coming up to them. "I thought I'd lost you."

Billy's lips tightened momentarily.

"This is my friend Lottie," he said. "Lottie, my father."

Ken held out his hand, but Lottie didn't seem to see it. "Glad to meet you," he said. He wondered if she was a girlfriend. Billy hadn't said anything about having a girl.

"My pleasure," she said. She looked past Ken and waved at someone behind him.

"Are you from this area?" he asked, groping for something to say.

"No, Ann Arbor."

Out of the corner of his eye Ken saw Billy shift his weight impatiently.

"We're off to lunch now, Papa," he said. "Lottie has a class at one; we don't have much time."

"I don't want to hold you up," said Ken, reddening. "Will you have some time later, Billy? Can I take you out to dinner?" He hesitated. "Or both of you?"

"My schedule's tight, like I told you," he said. "I'm booked for dinner with CHANCE tonight."

"CHANCE?"

"It's a service organization that runs a friendship program for disadvantaged high school students. We try to build positive relationships with students inside and outside class."

"Oh, that sounds very worthwhile." He forced enthusiasm into his voice. Then he said, "I guess we won't see each other again before I leave tomorrow morning."

"Maybe, maybe not," said Billy over his shoulder. He had begun to move down the hall with Lottie, pressing her forward with a hand on her back. "We may run into each other by accident in the Yard. People do all the time, right by the statue of John Harvard. So I'll just say bye for now." He sketched a wave over Lottie's head.

Ken watched them turn the corner to take the steps down to the first floor. He heard Lottie say: "Bill, you don't *really* call your father 'Papa,' do you? That's so *quaint*!"

When he returned to the hotel with the lemonade and egg salad sandwich, Pat Walsh was in the small lobby sweeping up a few stray candy wrappers near the vending machine. She was humming under her breath.

"Have a nice visit with your son?" she asked when she saw him.

Ken watched a trolley go by before he answered. "We had as much of a visit as we could," he said evasively. "As they say in Texas, he's as busy as a grasshopper on a red ant bed." He intended the remark to be funny, but it came out sounding serious.

She stopped sweeping to lean on her broom. "That first year of college is hard," she said kindly. "Kevin didn't come home as often as I would have liked when he was a freshman at Northeastern."

Ken didn't say anything.

"Now, of course, I worry about him all the time stuck over there in the Gulf. Every time one of those scud missiles drops I get a pain in the pit of my stomach." She patted her stomach to prove her point. Her eyes strayed to the paper bag containing Ken's lunch. "What are you doing this afternoon?"

"I thought I'd wander around Cambridge a bit," he said.

"I was going to suggest walking down to the river and watching the Harvard boys row. It's a pretty sight. The weather's going to be decent enough; cold, but clear."

"I might do that," he said. He was glad to know about the rowing. The contractors' convention held no interest for him. He'd attended a couple of conventions before, and had always come home feeling drained and insufficient. Most of the other men were too competitive for his taste, hasty to brag, eager to compare the square footage of condominiums and office buildings they put up.

"If I don't see you later today, I'll catch you in the morning," she said.

"At sunup." He smiled faintly at her.

The narrow aisles of the Wordsworth Bookstore were crowded with intense browsers. Ken didn't have a particular book in mind; any escapist spy novel would do. One man dressed in a pea jacket and torn jeans was conversing in

a low, conspiratorial tone to the row of books in front of him. Catching the words *Cuckoo's Nest*, Ken turned away, feeling that he was glimpsing something too private. He left the store without buying anything.

The cold air and the wind stiffened his cheeks. He was relieved to find shelter in the Harvard Bookstore a few blocks down the street. Several more homeless people had sought refuge there too. One dirty-bearded man was seated in a chair with a large book on Impressionist art spread out over his knees, a bedroll at his feet. He wasn't turning the pages. They didn't ask for much, thought Ken, plucking the latest Ludlum paperback off the shelf. All they wanted was to get out of the wind and talk to someone. He left the store and picked his way through the side streets to get to the Charles.

He sat on a narrow bench by a boathouse facing the river. Two groups of boys were carrying their shells down to the water. The oars looked like elongated snow shovels. The boys were so different in appearance. One had a red ponytail, another a mop of tight brown curls, a third, an Asian boy, had closely cropped black hair. Several were lean and hollow-chested, others compact, and rippling with muscles. They all seemed pleased to be together answering the same call. The scraps of easy banter ceased when they lowered their boats tenderly into the water.

The coach, riding in a decrepit launch, yelled something at them through a megaphone. He seemed to be organizing a race. Suddenly Ken heard the gnome-like cox in the boat closest to him start to scream out commands. Almost breathless, Ken watched the boys pull together at the same intense pace, their oars dipping rapidly in and out of the water. It was an obvious strain. One lanky youth in a long-sleeved yellow shirt had a rictus grin on his face. Ken nearly turned his eyes away, overwhelmed by the effort. After they rounded a bend, he stood up and crossed the river back to Cambridge, conscious of feeling a tug of regret.

Ken found a small Indian restaurant near Brattle Square where he ate a spicy spinach dish that burned his throat and made his eyes water. He tried to read his novel at the table, but the light was too poor. After he finished the meal he decided to return to the Yard. It was after eight; Billy might be back from dinner.

The dorms in the Yard were ablaze with lights. Ken stood by the statue of John Harvard and looked up at Hollis. He wondered which room was Billy's and if he was there then. A banner hung out the window of a dorm to his right, reading "We Support our Troops in the Gulf" Someone shouted, and a girl climbed out a window below the banner and began to climb up the fire escape. Two young men raced down the steps of another dorm. A few sad notes of a saxophone floated across the air towards him, and lingered in the night. The Yard had a restless, discontented kind of atmosphere, thought Ken, as though everybody was trying to keep busy while they waited for some disaster to occur.

He stamped his feet to warm them, and noticed a blue square painted on the sidewalk. What on earth did that mean? When he raised his eyes he saw

Billy come out of Hollis with another boy and Lottie. Billy was talking in a loud voice and gesturing with his hands. Ken stepped into the shadows.

"There's a great jazz group playing in Kendall Square tonight," he was saying. "We could go there first, and downtown afterwards."

"Let's go downtown first," said the other boy.

Ken watched them exit by a gate that opened onto Massachusetts Avenue. Overhead the sky seemed as dark as roofing tar to him. It was as if the stars had retreated after draining off all the light. He waited a few minutes and then made the trip back to the hotel.

He shaved and packed his suitcase before he went down to the lobby at six. A serious young black man was sitting behind the reception desk.

"Pat Walsh isn't here this morning?" Ken asked. He'd hoped to surprise her with another Texas expression he'd remembered during the night. He'd planned to say that he was taking to the tall timbers.

"You didn't hear the news?"

"I went straight to bed last night," he said. "I haven't heard anything."

"In Dhahran, a scud crashed into a barracks. Killed twenty-eight people. The Patriots didn't function." The clerk finished writing something in the guest register and looked up at Ken. "Pat's son was wounded." He tapped the counter with his pencil. "She was always telling us that the possible loss of a child—there was no way to prepare for it."



An Essay by
MICHAEL JAY KATZ

Anecdotal Understandings

In non-Western traditions and in Western non-scientific traditions, the answers to major philosophical questions often take the form of tales, stories, and anecdotes. What is life? Why is there death? How shall we behave when we are young or when we are old? What is more important, love or life, people or land, animals or art? Outside science, the answers to such questions have mythic motifs and they have human protagonists. They are anecdotes built from human perspectives, perspectives in which people determine what is captivating, what is interesting, and what is meaningful.

Anecdotes, beliefs, hopes, vagaries, and hunches also pervade science. The stories that a scientist tells are not too different from those anywhere else in society:

With the failure of these many efforts [to create life in the laboratory], science was left in the somewhat embarrassing position of having to postulate theories of [the origin of Life] which it could not demonstrate. After having chided the theologian for his reliance on myth and miracle, science found itself in the unenviable position of having to create a mythology of its own: namely, the assumption that what after long effort, could not be proved to take place today had, in truth, taken place in the primeval past (Eiseley, *The Immense Journey*).

[Standard science can even have a religious feel as it falls into certain ritual chants:

To what appear to be the simplest [scientific] questions, [today's physicists] tend to give either no answer or an answer which will at first sight be reminiscent more of a strange catechism than of the straightforward affirmatives [that are traditional in] physical science. If we ask, for instance, whether the position of the electron remains [always] the same, we must say "no"; if we ask whether the electron is at rest, we must say "no"; if we ask whether it is in motion, we must say "no." [It is true that] the Buddha has given such answers when interrogated as to the conditions of a man's self after his death; but these are not familiar answers for the tradition of [European] seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science (Oppenheimer, *Science and the Common Understanding*).]

Scientists are humans, and this human, anecdotal mode of explanation can be seen throughout the discipline of science. Sometimes the humanness is disguised in formal jargon. But other times it slips in as a natural conversational part of the analysis. For instance, it can be a pithy homely vignette, like:

"Barnacles were described many years ago by Louis Agassiz as 'Nothing more than a little shrimplike animal standing on its head in a limestone house and kicking food into its mouth'" (Villegier and Dethier, *Biological Principles and Processes*). Or it may be a more expansive anthropocentric narrative, like Professor Welty's description of the relation of birds to their home territories:

Territorialism [in birds] brings into play two antagonistic forces, one dynamic and centrifugal, and the other stable and centripetal. The dynamic, expansive, gas-like force that disperses birds may shove some of them into frontiers where living is rough but where occasionally the species may "make its fortune." The stable, centripetal force that rivets a bird to its territory corresponds to stay-at-home, property-owning conservatism that promotes comfortable living, reproductive success, and the preservation of family life. The poem, "To the Not Impossible Him" by [Edna St. Vincent] Millay (1922) touches on these two aspects of territorialism in man:

How shall I know, unless I go
 To Cairo or Cathay,
 Whether or not this blessed spot
 Is blest in every way?
 Now it may be, the flower for me
 Is this beneath my nose;
 How shall I tell unless I smell
 The Carthaginian rose?
 The fabric of my faithful love
 No power shall dim or ravel
 While I stay here,—but oh, my dear,
 If I should ever travel!

Snug in its home territory, the avian family is relatively secure, safe from want, safe from philandering adventurers — but it is just possible that a Carthaginian rose bush would provide a better nest site! (Welty, *The Life of Birds*)

Try as people might to be "objective," even scientific discourse seems to generate human coloring spontaneously. Scientists see through human eyes, they hear with human ears, and they speak in human language, and every phrase and word and inflection has a bit of human wildness to it. "The human sensations of love, hatred, envy, avarice and pity, and the other motive powers of the soul [are] not faults but [rather innate] qualities of human nature, which belong to it as much as air, heat, cold, storm, thunder and the like [innately belong to] the atmosphere" wrote the German novelist Berthold Auerbach (*Spinoza. A Novel*). Just as people live inextricably within the external natural

atmosphere, with all its winds and weathers, so too do we live buffeted continuously by the internal atmosphere of human emotions.

The tales that humans tell are stories about people and their adventures; this is where the fascinations lie, in science as well as elsewhere. Who can resist a scientific monograph on *Lumbricus* (earthworms) that reports:

Earthworms have also been used for human food. They are regarded as a delicacy by the Maoris in New Zealand. In Japan, earthworm pies have been made, and there have been reports from South Africa of fried earthworms being eaten, [and] primitive natives from New Guinea and parts of Africa have been reported to eat raw earthworms.

There have been many reports of earthworms being eaten by humans as medicine, to cure such ills as stones in the bladder, jaundice, piles, and fever and to alleviate impotency. Earthworm ashes have been used as a tooth powder in primitive societies, [and] it has been suggested that earthworms might contain a substance effective in curing rheumatism. (Edwards and Lofty, *Biology of Earthworms*)

No amount of pure, objective, and indirect organic chemistry, no formulaic text of laboratory pharmacology, no dry archive of technical jargon can answer satisfyingly the question that your child asks: "But, Dad, how does it *feel* to eat that stuff?" Anecdotal as they are, presentations such as the following are immediate, arresting, memorable, and relevant to humans: "The skin of amphibians contains a number of glands [and] the toxicity of the secretions [of these glands] varies from species to species ... A British observer, Miss E.A. Ormerod, has described the sensations produced when a great crested newt was taken in the mouth and gently pressed between the teeth. The effects included not only salivation but also local muscular spasms and irritation as far afield as the back of the throat, with general malaise and a headache which lasted for some hours" (Frazer, *Amphibians*)

Science is the methodical ordering of human sensory experiences, and the scientific constructs — the scientific ideas, theories, diagrams, and explanations — are at base *human* ideas. "Fundamental [human] ideas play the most essential role in forming a physical theory. Books on physics are full of complicated mathematical formulas. But [our] thoughts and ideas, not formulas, are the [true basis and] beginning of every physical theory" (Einstein and Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics*). It is human thought, with its innumerable and rich entanglements, and it is human ideas, colored by all manner of emotional tinges, personal myths, fantasies, and historical reflections, that build even the most "objective" sciences, such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

This is because *meaning* is a truly human phenomenon. *Meaning* is a personal and subjective coloration, a texture that people engrave into all their intellectual abstractions. Meaningfulness is imparted through the emotional ties that humans make with things from their direct reproducible sensory

experiences. "Any precise description of what we [physicists] do," wrote the Nobel laureate Percy Bridgman (*The Nature of Physical Theory*), "in making the measurements by which the various concepts of wave mechanics acquire meaning has [been found to] involve a reduction of everything to classical [human-scale] terms. For example, the [measuring apparatus] is eventually to be made heavy so that we can get up to the scale of ordinary [direct sensory] experience. [There is no escaping the requirement that] our meanings are ultimately to be sought in the realm of classical [everyday human] experience." Humans, human scale, and human experience must be built explicitly into even the most "objective" of the sciences.

Thus, science is built with tools that are natural to human beings, and the range of tools available for a human analysis of the world is broader than science usually acknowledges. Music, dance, poetry, and religion, for instance, each have special non-scientific forms of organizing the activities and the products of their disciplines, and some of these forms can be transferred to science. "In 1921," wrote Max Born (*Physics in My Generation*), one of the inventors of quantum mechanics, "I believed—and I shared this belief with most of my contemporary physicists—that science produced an objective knowledge of the world, which is governed by deterministic laws. The scientific method seemed to me superior to other, more subjective ways of forming a picture of the world—philosophy, poetry, and religion; and I even thought the unambiguous language of science to be a step towards a better understanding between human beings. [However, by] 1951, I believed in none of these things, [and] I now regard my former belief in the superiority of science over other forms of human thought and behaviour as a self-deception due to youthful enthusiasm over the clarity of scientific thinking as compared with the vagueness of [other] metaphysical systems."

Among these other special modes of understanding is *anecdote*. The anecdotal form includes collections of vignettes and specific examples and it does not presume a single over-arching simple theme. The sixteenth century English philosopher Francis Bacon said "[Scientists tend to propound a] view of the world so fashioned and masked, as if [it] were complete in all parts and [fully] finished, [seeming] to embrace and comprise everything which can belong to the subject. And although these [simple presentations are in actuality] ill filled out and are but as empty cases, still to the common mind they present the form and plan of a perfect science. But the first and most ancient seekers after truth were wont, with better faith and better fortune too, to throw the knowledge which they gathered from [direct experience] into aphorisms; that is, into short and scattered sentences [describing specific cases], not linked together by an artificial method, and did not pretend or profess to embrace the entire art." (*Selected Writings of Francis Bacon*)

We often speak anecdotally and, when the anecdotes are explicitly tied to humans, they are captivating, intriguing, and arresting. For instance: "Eagles," reports a contemporary ornithology text, "crack open tortoises by dropping them on rocks. Pliny says that the Greek poet Aeschylus met his death because an eagle, carrying a tortoise, mistook his bald head for a smooth

rock. Aeschylus had remained out of doors all that day, fearful for his life, because an oracle had foretold that he would be killed by the fall of a house.” (Welty)

In practice, the actual operations of the world—from the kitchen to the laboratory—are usually learned and understood anecdotally, in terms of human role models and human paradigms and human standards:

There is no school to learn the arts of atomic physics...We must talk of our subject not as community of specialized scientists but as men concerned with understanding, through analogy, description, and an act of confidence and trust, what other people [already] have done and thought and found. So men listen to accounts of soldiers returning from a campaign of unparalleled hardship and heroism, or of explorers from the high Himalayas, or of tales of deep illness, or of a mystic's communion with his God. Such stories tell little of [the detailed information of] what the teller has to tell [but] they are the threads which bind us in community and make us more than separate men. (Oppenheimer)

One of the reasons that anecdotal presentations are the common currency of teaching is that stories are good agents for transferring the incondensable complexity of the world. Good stories are themselves complex. “A fairy tale,” wrote Bruno Bettelheim, “is most of all a work of art, about which Goethe said in his prologue to *Faust*, ‘Who offers many things will offer some to many a one.’ This implies that any deliberate attempt to offer something specific to a particular person cannot be the [full] purpose of a work of art. Listening to a fairy tale and taking in the images it presents may be compared to a scattering of seeds, only some of which will be implanted in [any one particular] mind.” (*The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*) Similarly, J.R.R. Tolkien wrote:

[The tales of] literature work from mind to mind and [are] thus most progenitive. [Literature] is at once more universal and more poignantly particular. If it speaks of *bread* or *wine* or *stone* or *tree*, it appeals to the whole of these things, to their ideas, yet each hearer will give to them a peculiar personal embodiment in his imagination... If a story says “he climbed a hill and saw a river in the valley below,” the illustrator may catch, or nearly catch, his own picture, and it will be made out of all the hills and rivers and dales he has ever seen, but specially out of The Hill, The River, The Valley which were for him the first embodiment of the word. (*Tolkien Reader*)

The highly stylized traditional scientific statements are often simple and thin — but stories and anecdotes are complex, thick, rich, intuitive, personal, and intimate.

Anecdotal understandings form the substance of daily human life. People talk and think in terms of stories—human stories—and they use specific anecdotal examples when they want to punctuate their conversations. A friend had hiccoughs on the same day each month for three months in a row, I found a potato with a wrinkle that looked exactly like a smile, a muscle in my foot still hurts two months after I banged it on the stairs. Such anecdotes are the common discourse of our natural and homey lives.

A characteristic of anecdotes and stories is that they live simultaneously in parallel versions (Bolle, 1968): basic anecdotes are repeated time and time again (Detienne, 1986). In the realm of stories, there are no such creatures as “originals,” “derivatives,” or “variants.” In contrast, in our scientific and writing-based culture, “we are not accustomed to thinking in terms of [textual] fluidity. We find it difficult to grasp something that is multiform. [Instead,] it seems to us necessary to construct an ideal [correct] text or to seek an original, and we remain dissatisfied with an ever-changing phenomenon. [Stories, however,] are ever-changing; they are retold, and, from one point of view, each [particular telling of a tale] is an original. [At the same time,] from another point of view, it is impossible to retrace the work of generations of [purveyors of tales] to that moment when some [one individual teller] first [told] a particular [tale]” (Lord, *The Singer of Tales*).

Anecdotes are closer to the intimate personal human reality than are the supposed hard facts of traditional Western science. Anecdotes are written and told in terms of clear human actions and events. “[Stories] describe inner states of the mind by means of [direct and palpable] images and actions...internal processes are translated into visual [and tactile] images” (Bettleheim). The currency of human stories is direct sensory and emotional experiences — the primal anecdotes cling and claw and tickle, and they have direct, immediate, intuitive meaning for people.

Anecdotes present a human-based vista; they are charged with human emotions. This gives the anecdotal exemplars their texture, their weight, and their substance. Anecdotes do not intersect the universe by ephemeral, indirect, subconscious, or arcane connections — they are strongly real. Human anecdotes are built of real-world verities. Their bricks are crisp and palpable — the verbs are direct, the nouns are simple — at the same time, the tales are invigorated with primal human emotions. In an incondensably complex world, anecdotes are the memorable exemplars. They are built of human experiences on a human scale. In many ways, anecdotes are more real than the formal artifactual constructions and abstractions so characteristic of science — for who has ever seen a tensor or felt an arctangent?



JUDITH WERNER

Hubby, Pass the Beer

(with apologies to Edna St. Vincent Millay)

Art is not enough: it doesn't save
the soul or put the bacon on the table;
music doesn't make one strong or brave,
or turn a sow's ear into mink or sable;
no poem ever healed a body part,
no statue set a fullback's broken ankle,
or make the dumb to speak (or made them smart);
theater holds no mirror that doesn't rankle.
Art, like a football Sunday in the fall,
when TV tells it like it is, its anchor
reflecting nothing much (who's got the ball?),
shows me myself, so I can, with no rancor,
kick it back to you, and in the scrimmage
fiddle with the dials of your self-image.



Book Marks

Stannard, Martin. *Evelyn Waugh: The Later Years 1939-1966*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992. 523pp. \$29.95

Reviewed by Neil Brennan

Yugoslavia and its genocidal in-fighting dominate the news today, as the Air Force parachutes supplies—though to which faction, Serbian or Bosnian, one may never know—and we remember an English novelist who fifty years ago landed by night in an even darker Yugoslavia. Evelyn Waugh in 1944 thought he would find a land engaged in guerilla war with the German Army; what he found was a land more obsessed with exterminating enemies within. That shock and its related treacheries, real and supposed, darkened the rest of Waugh's career.

The irony has become more poignant with the years. A writer who dealt beautifully in the 1930s with the socially outrageous (Mrs Stitch, insulted by a traffic jam, driving her little car over the sidewalk and down the steps into a men's room in pursuit of someone she wants to speak to) became a writer in the 1940s shocked to discover the politically outrageous (Tito devoting more effort to destroying his rivals than Germans, British officers in Cairo misrepresenting the needs of partisan factions, men close to Churchill urging support of the Communist cause as the only one with a chance to win. And in 1946 Tito, emerging victorious to continue the execution of his rivals.) Waugh, in the words of his biographer, "emerged from the conflict feeling not only unwanted as an officer

but dishonoured by the British betrayal of Christendom." (xix-xx)

Sword of Honor, the trilogy that emerged from Waugh's experiences, suggests the author's anguish as he struggles to make sense of this god-forsaken world. Waugh is forced to find meaning as a novelist must, in terms of flesh and blood, words and actions. As an artist, he must try, somehow, to weave ugly details into a beautiful whole—when the flesh is obdurate, all actions duplicitous, and words unrelated to reality. That Waugh's major work, the trilogy *Sword of Honor*, fails as a novel is only part of the sadness.

In completing the biography begun with *Evelyn Waugh: The Early Years 1903-1939* (1989), Martin Stannard now struggles to make sense of Waugh's own endgame.

A decent biography has certainly been needed. Frederick Stopp's *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of an Artist* (1958) suffers from politeness, from being written under Waugh's shadow, and Christopher Sykes' *Evelyn Waugh: A Biography* (1975) suffers from laziness. Relying on his intermittent personal friendship with Waugh, Sykes neglects to get the facts, shuffling over areas where he is aware of his ignorance and adjudicating complacently when unaware.

Martin Stannard's biography, in contrast, quickly earns our respect for its industry and scholarship. New facts will come to light as years pass, no doubt, but after Stannard one feels there will not be many. To resolve the Yugoslavian problems, for instance, Stannard juxtaposes Waugh's memoirs not only with published memoirs and histories but with with official Foreign Office reports, classified secret at



Book Marks

the time, which he has extracted from the files of the Public Records Office. These variously qualify, amplify and elucidate Waugh's observations and suggest a deeper level of personal guilt than Waugh was ever able to openly express.

Indeed Stannard deserves our thanks. The ten or so volumes of published letters from or about Waugh and his friends are not neglected, but "private collections" of unpublished letters are cited as often. The rich lode of Waugh lore at the Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas has been well mined, and the authority on that subject, Robert Murray Davis, properly consulted. Interviews, personal correspondence, manuscript correlations. . . one could extend the list of gold stars for research. Enough to say that the Waugh student will be impressed as he checks details (the footnotes are where God and Waugh wanted them, conveniently at the foot of the page) and the casual reader will find his attention held by good storytelling and a clear style.

Laborious scholarly excavations, yes, but the results justify them. At the heart of what may be technically Waugh's most interesting novel, *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, for instance, is the descent of a BBC-TV interview team upon Pinfold's country retreat. The snide and hostile interviewers, and the subsequent broadcast, unleash Voices that pursue Pinfold halfway round the world. But it is not until Stannard's biography that a clear picture emerges as to how the Voices originated. Instead of one interview (as Sykes would have it—perhaps partly because the novel presents only one) two interviews were held, one at Piers Court (18 August 1953) and an-

other at Broadcasting House in London (28 September 1953).

But neither of those was broadcast. Waugh himself asked that the first be treated as a dress rehearsal, and when in the second interview he also failed to score the points he had hoped to, he was glad to get perusal the text of a composite interview which, after several deletions, he approved for broadcast. Such a sequence accounts for Pinfold's horror—not the hostility of the lefty interviewers, which he had expected, but his own complicity in inviting them to have a second go, and then approving the broadcast of the fake (patched and spliced) composite. No wonder Pinfold's Voices "repeat and repeat in his ears." He had been given three chances to make himself clear on the evils of "this century of the common man," and had clearly failed.

No clue to that in Sykes.

Still, assured of Stannard's competence and of the usefulness of his research, the reader who honors Waugh's art may ask if the viewpoint and sympathies are adequate to the task of a Waugh biography. Here doubts may arise.

Fleeing what was then called the Great Bore War, Waugh joined the Royal Marines in December 1939, hoping for action. Instead, he was posted to guard duty in Ireland. He transferred to a Commando unit and was happy when his unit was sent from Egypt to stem the German advance in Crete. This constituted Waugh's first chance for military glory, and he did not distinguish himself. Dropped (with his friend Randolph Churchill, son of the Prime Minister) into the middle of a debacle—German paratroops



Book Marks

landed, Stuka bombings begun, British defenders in disorderly retreat—Waugh (like Lord Jim) had not much of a chance, it must be admitted, and with Randolph quickly reached the logical conclusion that not much could be done except to take steps for their own evacuation.

All shameful enough, but when Waugh's account of the affair depicts the commander of one unit crouched in terror under a table and Stannard comes upon evidence that during a bombing Waugh had joined others under a table, we are invited to view Waugh as a hypocrite. Not at all. To walk into a headquarters and find the commander paralyzed is one thing; to take protective measures when being bombed is another. No need to overdo it. Waugh's self-righteousness is bad enough.

Stannard underlines all of Waugh's notorious failings as a human being—the vanity, the bristling hostility, the coldness, prejudice and anger, the hair-trigger scorn—but insists on his virtues as well—unflagging generosity, kindness to (unpresumptuous) strangers, love of family and friends. Understanding and sympathy are to be found also in what seems to be Stannard's main thesis: that Waugh was more aware of his failings than we realized, and strove for contrition, strove to become perhaps the antithesis of his public image—a humble and charitable servant of God. That desire to change he could not admit, even to friends. No Pecksniff he. Waugh abandoned the roles he had most loved to play—of arrogant dandy, irascible squire, pompous Tory clubman, curmudgeon with bristling cane, abominator of children, troglodytic

theologian—and in secret fought his own demons to preserve his soul.

A good biographer may be excused if he fails to contribute much original criticism; here no excuse is needed. Notably Stannard links Waugh's story "Compassion" (1949) with the overall structure of *Sword of Honor* (1952-61) and rereads the latter as Waugh's *mea culpa*. The icons of Waugh's youth strut onto the stage at the opening of the novel—aristocrats in nonchalant war-gear, society beauties, fashionable artists—and are driven out of the protagonist's life in the end, exposed in their corruption. Surprisingly, the enlisted ranks have shamed his prejudgment by often serving with more courage than aristocratic officers such as Randolph Churchill. "It wasn't your manners I was complaining of," Waugh reportedly said to Randolph Churchill after a strafing, "it was your cowardice."

Stannard finds this story "legendary, but too significant to omit." The argument is that, by the end of the war, Waugh's disillusionment with the aristocracy was complete.

One does not lightly dispense with the myths and idols and friends of a life time—nor with its judgments. My feeling that *Sword of Honor* fails as a novel also needs reexamination. But then one of the ancillary functions of a good biography is to keep us humble.





Contributors

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